

SOUL POUR: LIBERATING AND EMPOWERING BLACK WOMEN TO
PRAISE AND WORSHIP AUTHENTICALLY, PASSIONATELY, AND
UNAPOLOGETICALLY THROUGH WOMANIST WORSHIP

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ABSTRACT

SOUL POUR: LIBERATING AND EMPOWERING BLACK WOMEN TO PRAISE AND WORSHIP AUTHENTICALLY, PASSIONATELY, AND UNAPOLOGETICALLY THROUGH WOMANIST WORSHIP

by

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The women of Harris Memorial CME Church are the context of this ministry project. The problem is that the women are not emotionally, mentally, and spiritually free to praise and worship God in their own way. The hypothesis is if the women of Harris Memorial CME Church are exposed to authentic, passionate, and unapologetic womanist worship experiences, they will be liberated and empowered overall and liberated and empowered to praise and worship in their own way. The methodology included a journal, a prayer book, a workshop, and three womanist worship experiences. Results suggest that the participants were liberated and empowered.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer acknowledges the Holy Trinity for leading her to United Theological Seminary (UTS), the Master of Divinity Equivalency, the Doctor Of Ministry degree, and the Congregational Development And Forming New Faith Communities In The 21st Century, Including A Womanist/Feminist Perspective focus group.

The writer thanks her mother, Pat Allen, for supporting her in all of her endeavors. She thanks Reverend Dr. Earl D. Hudson Sr. for encouraging her to enroll into the Doctor of Ministry program at UTS. She also thanks him for allowing her to utilize the women congregants of Harris Memorial CME Church as her context for her doctor of ministry project. The writer thanks her context associates, Jacqueline Ewings, Ericka Murphy, Dawn Bryant-Jones, Tiffany Bryant, Tenisha Folley, and Yulonda Smith for assisting her with developing and implementing the ministry project at Harris Memorial CME Church. She also thanks the women of Harris Memorial CME Church for participating in the ministry project.

The writer thanks her mentor, Dr. Angela D. Washington, for her love, support, and mentorship and for introducing her to womanist theology and theory. She also thanks her mentor, Dr. Donnell J. Moore, for his insight, support, and mentorship. The writer thanks her professional associates, Dr. Earl D. Hudson, Sr., Dr. Kent Johnson, Dr. Ronsonn Jackson, Dr. Tamara England, and Dr. Janae Moore, for their time, support, and feedback. She thanks her peer associate, Rev. Janie Dowdy-Dandridge, for

encouragement and support throughout the process of completing the requirements for the Doctor of Ministry degree at UTS. The writer also thanks her peers in her focus group for sharing their lives with the writer and for their support and encouragement. Lastly, the writer thanks her editor, Dr. Leroy Cothran, for taking the time out of his busy schedule to edit the writer's doctor of ministry document.

DEDICATIONS

The writer dedicates this doctor of ministry document to God, her sustainer, Jesus, the lover of her heart, soul, and spirit, and the Holy Spirit, her guide and the source of her passion; to all black women; and to all who are in love with Jesus Christ and who are not ashamed to praise and worship authentically, passionately, and unapologetically. Finally, the writer dedicates this doctor of ministry document to all who have been demoralized, disempowered, and/or oppressed.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AME	African Methodist Episcopal
APA	American Psychological Association
BS	Bachelor of Science
CAARE	Child Adolescent Abuse Resource Evaluation
CJ	Chaminade Julianne
CME	Christian Methodist Episcopal
CMHC	Community Mental Health Center
COGIC	Church of God In Christ
ITC	Interdenominational Theological Centers
LEAD	Leaders for Equality and Action in Dayton
MA	Master of Arts
MEC	Methodist Episcopal Church
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
PsyD	Doctoral Degree in Clinical Psychology
UD	University of Dayton
UTS	United Theological Seminary
VBS	Vacation Bible School
WSU	Wright State University
WSU-SOPP	Wright State University- School of Professional Psychology

**But Hannah answered, “No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled;
I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring
out my soul before the Lord.**

1Samuel 1:15

INTRODUCTION

This doctor of ministry project was birthed from the writer's love for praise and worship and passion for liberating and empowering black women. The writer's obedience to the Holy Spirit prompted her to choose the women at Harris Memorial CME Church as her context. This doctor of ministry project focused on liberating and empowering the women of Harris Memorial CME Church to praise and worship in their own way since the writer observed that the women were holding back their praise and worship during corporate worship services.

The terms black and African American are commonly used to describe a race of people born in the United States. The writer's preference is to use the term black to discuss and describe persons of African descent who were born in America. However, both terms were utilized in this document since various authors were reviewed in this document.

There are six chapters in this document. Chapter One, *Ministry Focus*, explored the writer's life and context, Harris Memorial CME Church, and the synergy between the writer and Harris Memorial CME Church. The writer has had an intimate relationship with the Holy Trinity since she was a young child. God served as a parent to the writer during her childhood following her father's death when she was three years old and has been her sustainer during times of financial instability. Jesus has served as the writer's companion throughout her life since she was raised as an only child and has always been

a loner. The writer has often felt the presence of the Holy Spirit when she has prayed to God or reflected on the awesomeness of God. Thus, engaging in praise and worship has been a natural occurrence throughout her life. The writer is a passionate person.

However, she has been shy throughout her life and has held back her passion, intellect, and wisdom across settings. She has attended Harris Member CME Church since infancy and was baptized in the church at age seventeen. The problem is that the women of Harris Memorial CME Church are not emotionally, mentally, and spiritually free to praise and worship God in their own way in spite of the praise and worship that is within them due to their histories of oppression, demoralization, or disempowerment in the Church and in society. The writer can relate to the above as she has often been told by persons, who had not previously seen her in a professional role or heard her preach, that they did not know that she had *all of that in her* once she opened her mouth.

Chapter Two, *The State Of The Art In This Ministry Model*, reviewed relevant models of ministry and introduced and described the current ministry model. The womanist model was introduced and briefly described. Authenticity, passion, and empowerment were described from a womanist perspective. Praise and worship was differentiated and various worship planning models and worship models were reviewed. Authentic, passionate, and unapologetic praise and worship, empowering worship, and womanist worship were described.

Chapter Three, *Theoretical Foundation And Review Of Literature*, reviewed the historical, biblical, and theological foundations of praise and worship. Women's history of praise and worship, slaves' history of praise and worship, and black women's history of praise and worship was reviewed. The history of the Christian Methodist Episcopal

(CME) Church and the history of praise and worship within the CME Church were reviewed. Womanist biblical interpretation was explored prior to the presentation and exegesis of scriptures that involved God/Jesus' interaction with female biblical characters (Hannah, Miriam, the woman with the bent down back, the woman with the alabaster jar, the woman at the well, and the woman with issues of blood). Liberation theologies, such as feminist theology, black feminist theology, and womanist theology were reviewed. Black women's history of oppression within the Black Church was also reviewed. The theologies of praise, worship, authentic, passionate, and unapologetic praise, and worship were reviewed. The theology of praise and worship within the Black Church and the CME Church was also reviewed.

Chapter Four, *Methodology*, described the writer's journey in developing this doctor of ministry project. The hypothesis is that if the women of Harris Memorial CME Church are exposed to authentic, passionate, and unapologetic womanist worship experiences, they will be liberated and empowered to praise and worship in their own way and liberated and empowered overall. The demographic information regarding the female participants was provided. The demographic information regarding female and male participants in the secondary research, which included a womanist sermon, was also provided. This doctor of ministry research project was described in detail in chapter four. The methodology of the primary research included a Soul Pour Journal, the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop, Three Womanist Worship Experiences, Our Testimony Poem, and the Soul Pour Prayer Book. A description of the qualitative analyses (Yes/No Questionnaire, focus groups, workshop pre-test, workshop post-test, and feedback measures) was provided.

Chapter Five, *Field Experience*, described the exploratory analysis of the data collected during the current ministry model. Overall, the results suggest that the participants were pregnant with praise and worship prior to the interventions and that authentic, passionate, and unapologetic praise and worship was birthed during this doctor of ministry project. Additionally, the results suggest that this ministry project was liberating and empowering to the participants.

Chapter Six, *Reflection, Summary and Conclusion*, provided a summary of this doctor of ministry model, ways that this ministry model may be improved, implications for future research, the writer's reflections on her field experience, and the writer's insights and growth.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Snapshot Of A Life

Dr. Candace Devon Allen-Staton wrote a poem entitled, *I Accept* in 2007. The poem is about the writer's life and acceptance into the call of ministry at age thirty.

Below is *I Accept*.

I Accept

As You are aware
My entrance into this
World was abnormal
I'm just glad You were there
Because only a miracle
Or destiny
Could have allowed me
To survive being born
Two months prematurely
From my mother who
Experienced cardiac arrest
Due to
Complications from the flu

Though I tried to hide it
Not wanting to look
Like I had given into insanity
I know You saw me
Alone at home
Speaking to audiences unknown
Walking, kneeling, or lying
While talking to Someone unseen
Writing in notepads
Beyond the former fad
Of being a female rapper

To writing anything
That could make me feel
And reveal

After years of reflection
I've come to the realization
That it is not coincidental
That my passion, education,
Profession, career direction
Poetry and life story
Lead me to
Connecting, Motivating, and Educating
Those with whom
I share an intersubjective space

The recent conflicts and persecution
That I have endured
And the disconnection
That I have felt
After proclaiming
That you freed me
Has led me to the discovery
That I will continuously
Go from living to dying
Within
Until I focus on my calling

The tears that glide
Down my face
When I feel
You and destiny
Embody me
And the excitement
That flows through my veins
When I am
Experiencing
Listening
Hearing
Touching and
Speaking
Reveal to me
That I must embrace
My destiny
Or continue to feel ill

So at this moment
 Without knowing
 All that will happen
 I accept
 My calling

Though I am a loner
 I am aware
 That I cannot do this alone

And so...

Whenever I'm
 Feeling lonely
 I ask that You
 Hold me
 Whenever
 I feel that no one
 Understands me
 I ask that You
 Know me

Whenever I
 Feel like I'm regressing
 I ask that You
 Be my mirror of perfection

But for now
 I ask that You
 Hear me
 As I fulfill
 My destiny...¹

I Accept suggests that the writer has always known that there was something special about her life. It also demonstrates that she has always had an intimate relationship with God. Moreover, it reports on her history of preaching in the confines of her home as a young child. Additionally, *I Accept* highlight the writer's urgent need to accept her calling. This poem is currently meaningful to the writer because it emphasizes

¹Candace D. Allen-Staten. *I Accept* in *Embrace* Compact Disc. Sacramento, California, 2007.

the writer's desires to be more active in ministry and to develop a professional identity that integrates the fields of ministry and psychology.

Family

The writer was born and raised in Trotwood, Ohio. She was raised as the only child of a single mother, Martha Patricia Allen, following the death of her father, Clarence Johnny Staten, when she was three years old. She was her mother's only child and her father's youngest child. The writer admires her mother with whom she has a close bond. Her mother has always supported and encouraged her throughout her endeavors. Her faith in God grew as a result of her witnessing the miracles that God performed in her mother, who endured various illnesses during the writer's life. The writer viewed God as her father after her earthly father died. She thought that everyone's father was deceased when she heard a priest say *Our Father Who Art In Heaven* when she was five years old.

The writer adored her great maternal aunt, Pearl, who she frequently visited and stayed with during vacations from school. She enjoyed the sporadic visits from her brother, Johnny, and was grateful when he presented her at the Debutante Ball, helped her move, and attended one of her graduations. She loved talking on the telephone to her sister, Elaine, receiving postcards and gifts from Elaine, and visiting Elaine in New Jersey. However, the writer was saddened after Elaine stopped talking to her, at age ten, when she was unable to attend Elaine's wedding.

Relationships

The writer has developed friendships through school, employment, and church. To date, she has had four serious romantic relationships. Two of her ex-boyfriends accused her of looking down on them due to her level of education. Her last ex-boyfriend was unsupportive of her call into ministry. The writer is currently unmarried and has no children. However, she has a very spoiled Shih Tzu named Chloe.

Education

The writer attended Resurrection Catholic Elementary School in Dayton, Ohio from kindergarten through eighth grade. She learned about the Holy Trinity, prayer, and the Bible and was exposed to documentaries on racism, such as *The Eyes On The Prize* at Resurrection. The writer attended Chaminade Julianne (CJ) Catholic High School in Dayton, Ohio from ninth through twelfth grade and graduated in 1995. Her experiences at Resurrection and CJ were distinct because black students were most represented at Resurrection whereas white students were most represented at CJ. Her leadership skills were developed during her offices in the Girls Assembly and Grand Girls Assembly.

The writer attended Wright State University (WSU) in Fairborn, Ohio from 1995 through 1999. She majored in psychology because she believed that it was her Christian duty to choose a profession in which she could help persons who may be misunderstood, misjudged, or abandoned by Church or society. A poem that she wrote and performed during the Miss Black Wright State Pageant about black women was highlighted in the school's newspaper. The writer graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology as an honor's scholar in 1999.

The writer attended the University of Dayton (UD) from 2000 through 2002. It was at UD that she discovered that she was viewed as a black student as opposed to a student and thus would be viewed as a black psychologist in the future. The writer graduated with a Master of Arts in clinical psychology in 2002.

The writer attended Wright State University School of Professional Psychology (WSU-SOPP) from 2002 through 2007. The writer developed her identity as a black woman and a future black woman psychologist at WSU-SOPP. Her most valuable training experience occurred at a community mental health center (CMHC) in which the majority of her clients were black women. It was at the CMHC that the writer discovered her passion for providing mental health services to black women. At that time, she became aware that black women tend to rely on religion and religious practices as a way to cope with daily stressors and problems and as a tool to understand and better their lives. The writer conducted focus groups with black women in a domestic violence shelter and conceptualized their unique experiences with domestic violence from the black feminist theory. She conceptualized black women's experiences with child sexual abuse and disclosure from a black feminist theory, social constructivist theory, and object relations theory as part of her dissertation. The writer was reminded of her identity as a future black woman psychologist during her comprehensive clinical examination and dissertation defense at WSU-SOPP.

The writer successfully completed American Psychological Association (APA) Pre-Doctoral Internship at the Child and Adolescent Abuse, Resource, Evaluation (CAARE) Diagnostic and Treatment Center in Sacramento, California in 2007, where she

specialized in trauma. Dr. Candace D. Allen-Staten graduated with a doctoral degree in clinical psychology in 2007 from WSU-SOPP.

Postdoctoral Training/Employment

The writer briefly conducted psychological evaluations at a pediatric medical facility in Sacramento, California from 2007 through 2008. She conducted disability evaluations at a private practice in Sacramento, California from 2007 through 2008. She primarily conducted psychological evaluations at a private practice in Douglasville, Georgia from 2008 through 2009. She conducted psychological evaluations and provided therapeutic services at a private practice in College Park, Georgia in 2009.

The Licensed Psychologist

Dr. Candace D. Allen-Staten was licensed in the state of Georgia in 2009. She provided individual therapy to clients in 2010 and 2011 at a private practice in Kennesaw, Georgia. She has specialized in trauma and provided mental health services at three offices at Medlin Treatment Center in Cartersville, Marietta, and Stockbridge, Georgia since 2010.

Church Experiences

The writer has attended Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church since she was an infant. She was baptized when she was seventeen years old. She has been a member of the youth and young adult choir and the mass choir at the church. She has also served as the co-director and director of Vacation Bible School (VBS) and

the co-director of the Board of Christian Education at the church. She became intrigued by revivals after she attended a revival at Harris Memorial CME Church in which the revivalist preached with conviction and the Holy Spirit and anointed the congregants with oil during the altar call.

It was at a revival service at a non-denominational church in Sacramento, California, when the writer was thirty years old, that an unfamiliar woman described the writer as "peculiar" and prophesied that the writer would be a "powerful speaker before the world." The aforementioned prophesy served as confirmation to the thoughts of accepting her call to preach that were dancing around in the writer's head.

The Spoken Word Poet

Poetry poured from the writer's heart during her times of loneliness and contemplation in California. She wrote and performed poetry to liberate and empower black women and the black community. Her poetry focused on self-love, relationship issues, and spirituality. The writer's poetry writing and performances served as a vehicle to get her to accept her call into ordained ministry.

The Minister/Preacher

The writer accepted her calling into ordained ministry during a time of loneliness and financial hardship. She prayed to God, wrote poetry, reflected on her life and God's eternal presence in her life, and recalled her rationale for choosing psychology as a career path during that time. She also became aware of the spiritual shift in her poetry writing

and her ability to minister to others through poetry at the time that she accepted her calling into ordained ministry.

The writer preached her first sermon at Emmanuel CME Church in 2007 for graduates' day under the guise of being a motivational speaker. At that time, she preached a sermon entitled, *You Can't Take My Joy Away*, which was inspired by her experience of being demoralized by a Caucasian female supervisor at her first postdoctoral position. She subsequently preached at Harris Memorial CME Church in Dayton, Ohio in December of 2007 and was licensed to preach in 2008. The writer's ministry became alive at Emmanuel CME Church, under the leadership of Reverend Darrell Watson, Sr., in that she preached regularly, led worship services at a nursing home, taught the adult Sunday school class, attended Bible study, and sang in the choir.

The writer relocated from Sacramento, California to Douglasville, Georgia to attend seminary at the Interdenominational Theological Center. She lost clothes and shoes and other items in her transition to Georgia and experienced isolation when she initially moved to Georgia. She sought God for comfort and guidance during her time of isolation. She only had a futon and dining room table and chair set for her first year in Georgia. However, her need to start all over financially was not as bothersome as her confusion as to the reason that she had moved to the distant and strange land of Georgia.

The writer has regularly preached at Harris Memorial CME Church during visits to Dayton, Ohio since she accepted her calling to preach in 2007. She briefly served on the ministerial team at the Servants of Christ CME Church in Douglasville, Georgia, under the leadership of Reverend Leticia Douglas, in 2008 and was on the ministerial team at Butler Street CME Church in Atlanta, Georgia from 2009 through 2012 under the

leadership of Reverend Dr. Anthony M. Alford, Sr., and Reverend Christopher M. Waller. She opted to not begin the process of ordination in the CME denomination, which is commonly referred to as going on trial, in 2010. However, she was placed on trial in 2011.

The writer was ordained with her deacon orders in the CME Church during the Quadrennial Annual Conference in Savannah, Georgia on July 19, 2012 by Bishop Kenneth W. Carter of the Sixth Episcopal District. She was appointed Assistant to the Pastor at a new church start and "contemporary church" named, *Abundance of Praise CME Church* in Cedartown, Georgia.

The writer was enrolled in the Master of Divinity Equivalency and Doctor of Ministry program at the United Theological Seminary (UTS) in January of 2010. She will graduate from UTS in December of 2012.

Harris Memorial CME Church

Harris Memorial CME Church is located at 3950 Haney Road in Dayton, Ohio. A brief review regarding the descriptive data and demographics of the state, city, and 45416 zip code area are provided. The state of Ohio is located in the Midwest region of the United States. It is the seventh most populated state in the United States. Ohio has a current population of 11,454,951.² Dayton, Ohio is known as *the birthplace of aviation* due to the invention of the airplane by Wilbur and Orville Wright in 1903.³

²Ohio Government, www.development.ohio.gov/research/documents/p7000pdf (assessed February 22, 2012).

³About Dayton, Ohio, <http://www.daytoncvb.com/about-dayton/> (assessed February 11, 2012).

Demographics

According to the Percept Group, 6, 214 people lived in the 45416 zip code area in 2010. The population included 65% African Americans, 31% Anglo Americans, 3% Native Americans and Other, 1% Hispanics, and less than 1% Asians. The study further reported that 25% of the 45416 population were from the Millenials generation (ages 9 to 28), 24% were from the Survivors generation (ages 29 to 49), 22% were from the Boomers generation (ages 50 to 67), 14% were from the Silents generation (ages 68-85), 10% were from the Generation Z generation (ages 0 to 8), and 6% were from the Builders generation (ages 86 and up).⁴

According to the study, 50% of the 45416 populations were married, 29% were single and never married, and 20% were divorced or widowed. It was reported that single mothers headed 48% of the households that included children; 45% included married couples, and 7% included single fathers. The reported average annual household income for the 45416 zip code was \$43, 640 in which 17% of the households had an income below poverty (\$15, 000).⁵

The Percept Group reported that 81% of the households in the 45416 zip code preferred *historic Christian groups*, 13% had no preference, and 6% preferred *Non-historic Christian Groups*. In terms of preferences, 24% of the households in the 45416 zip code area preferred contemporary worship, another 24% preferred traditional architecture, 23% preferred traditional music, 18% preferred contemporary music,

⁴Percept Group Inc. *First View 2010 Study Area Definition: Zip Code 30303* www.perceptgroup.com (assessed October 28, 2011).

⁵Ibid.

another 18% preferred traditional worship, and 15% preferred contemporary architecture. In terms of church programs, it was reported that 35% of the households in the 45416 zip code area preferred recreation, 29% preferred spiritual development, 21% preferred community/social services, and 9% preferred personal development.⁶

History

Bishop H. P. Porter inquired about planting another CME Church in Dayton, Ohio in 1946 after he noticed that Phillips Temple CME Church was overcrowded. He was subsequently informed that the first CME Church building in Dayton, Ohio was for sale in the amount of \$12,000. The church building was then retained with a payment of \$500. The new church was named Harris Memorial CME Church after Reverend H. E. Harris, who built the first CME Church in Dayton, Ohio.⁷

Reverend Emmaus Fitten was assigned to the new church during the Annual Conference in 1946. The first worship service was held in September of 1946 at Smith's Memorial Chapel. The church opened its doors in January of 1947. However, the grand opening of Harris Memorial CME Church was held on November 23, 1947. The first official location of Harris Memorial CME Church was at 601 Germantown Street. The church moved to 1100 Kammer Avenue in 1962 and its current location at 3950 Haney Road in 1995. To date, Harris Memorial CME Church has had eleven pastors. Its current pastor, Reverend Dr. Earl D. Hudson Sr., has been the pastor of the church since 1999.⁸

⁶Ibid.

⁷Harris Memorial CME Church, *Harris Memorial 65th Church Anniversary & Mortgage Burning Booklet*. January 30, 2011.

⁸Ibid.

Harris Memorial CME Church celebrated its 65th church anniversary and mortgage burning on January 30, 2011.

Congregational Life

Harris Memorial CME Church has approximately 315 members. However, it is estimated that 150 members are active in the church and that 125 members attend weekly worship services. There are significantly more female members than male members of the congregation. However, the exact numbers are unknown. The congregation is composed of persons across the lifespan and of families that have been long-term members of the church. Thus, many of the young adult members have grown up in the church. The senior adults primarily manage Harris Memorial CME Church. The congregation is aging and declining. Several senior adult members were placed in nursing homes in recent years and the congregation endured the deaths of a significant amount of members in 2011.

The members of Harris Memorial CME Church tend to socialize following church services. However, there has been ongoing conflict amongst the members of Harris Memorial CME Church for several years. For example, there have been conflicts about music ministry, worship services, and financial matters. The ongoing conflict has stunted the congregation's growth and has resulted in a loss of members, a loss of passion and involvement in ministry and worship, and financial hardship.

Ministry

The current ministries and boards at Harris Memorial CME Church include the American Red Cross Food Bank, the Leaders for Equality and Action in Dayton (LEAD), the mass choir, male chorus, praise team, praise dancers, ushers, missionaries, trustees, stewards, and stewardesses. Harris Memorial CME Church has weekly Bible study, Sunday school, and prayer meetings, which are attended by relatively few members.

Vision And Mission Statements

Harris Memorial CME Church's vision statement is "Bring the multitude to Christ, Fill the pews, Then knock out the walls." Its mission statement is "Renewing our commitment to Christ, Reaching out to the Community, Receiving people into the congregation, and strengthening their relationship with God through Christ." The vision and mission statements appear to be idealistic and premature as the congregation needs to become a cohesive and mature Body of Christ before it can successfully evangelize and minister to others.

Praise And Worship

The style of praise and worship at Harris Memorial CME Church is mixed in that the worship service is primarily traditional, yet the music ministry is both traditional and contemporary. The worship service includes the following: Praise and Worship, Call to Worship, Opening Hymn, Affirmation of Faith, Invocation, Lord's Prayer, Holy Scripture, Gloria Patri, Ministry of Music: A & B Selections, Ministry of Music: Male Chorus, Announcements, Welcome, Altar Call, Giving and Receiving of Gifts, The

Offeratory Sentence, Pre-Sermon Song, Sermon, Call to Christian Discipleship, Remarks, Benediction, and Doxology.

Harris Memorial CME Church has been particularly known for its former gospel choir and youth and young adult choir and their praise team and male chorus. Many members of the congregation tend to sit stoically during the worship services. Thus, the pastor, ministerial staff, worship leader, and choir members occasionally confront the congregation for not being more active or responsive to various aspects of the worship services. However, there are members who overtly praise and worship and who respond to the preacher during the sermon.

At the beginning of the 2011-2012-conference year, Reverend Dr. Earl D. Hudson, Sr. requested that members meet with him individually to discuss their concerns regarding the church and/or his leadership.

The following concerns related to praise and worship were presented during the church conference on March 5, 2012:

Too much activity in the pulpit; Sometimes there is the appearance that they (pulpit) have discord; When the pastor asks people to stop walking during church services, persons with special needs should be taken into consideration; A person should be designated to pass the microphone to visitors on Sunday mornings; The music sometimes seems to be just noise; The drum playing causes headaches and has no spiritual feeling; Why does the praise team sing before the sermon; Why is there a second prayer by the prayer band; Most of our members are not ready for change; The members are apathetic about meetings and Bible study;⁹ It's not necessary (for the pastor) to stand and defend bulletin changes every Sunday; (Pastor) Keep on preaching the Word and be the leader God has ordained you to be; (Pastor) There are times

⁹Harris Memorial CME Church, *Recommendations That Are Specific To Pastor. Expressed by Participants of the Church*. Harris Memorial CME Church Conference, March 5, 2012.

jocularity damages the message; (Pastor) Change the format of Bible study; and Morning worship service is too long.¹⁰

The Synergy

The writer is simultaneously a minister at the church and an active representation of the congregation. Both focal points enable the writer to relate and empathize with the congregation and to empower and minister to the congregation.

The writer has been shy and reserved throughout much of her life. Thus, she has at times concealed her passion and intellect in various settings. Moreover, she conformed to the reserved and traditional worship services at Butler Street CME Church in Atlanta, Georgia and diluted her bold preaching style to fit in with the congregation and ministerial staff. Likewise, the congregation at Harris Memorial CME Church is reserved in their corporate praise and worship. This is likely due to the congregation's disagreements about various aspects of the weekly worship service and ongoing conflict at the church.

Her mother taught the writer at a young age “crying does not change anything.” Thus, she viewed crying as a sign that she had succumbed to the circumstances that prompted her distress. However, the writer learned through her education and clinical and personal experiences that crying is normal and can be healthy and cathartic. The congregation at Harris Memorial CME Church has experienced heartache in the form of grief, illness, financial hardships, and conflict. Thus, they would benefit from worship experiences that promote catharsis and/or deliverance.

¹⁰Harris Memorial CME Church, *Issues and Concerns Expressed by Participants of the Church* Harris Memorial CME Church Conference, March 5, 2012.

The writer is passionate about liberating and empowering black women. She is aware that black women have a special relationship with each other given their shared commonalities of racism, sexism, and classism. Thus, the writer chose the women of Harris Memorial CME Church as her context for the current doctor of ministry project. The problem is that the women of Harris Memorial CME Church are not emotionally, mentally, and spiritually free to praise and worship God in their own way in spite of the praise and worship that is within them due to their histories of oppression, demoralization, and/or disempowerment in the Church and in society. The writer can relate to the above as she has often been told by persons, who had not previously seen her in a professional role or heard her preach, that they did not know that she had *all of that in her* once she opened her mouth.

In summary, the focus of the current doctor of ministry project was to liberate and empower the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church to praise and worship authentically, passionately, and unapologetically and to liberate and empower overall through womanist worship experiences.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

The writer feels the presence of the Lord when she attends worship services at Harris Memorial CME Church. However, she usually observes most of the congregation sitting still and looking forward as though watching a show or a lecture during moments that inspire the felt presence of the Holy Spirit. The writer often hears clergy, the worship leader, and soloists criticizing the congregation for not visibly praising and worshipping God during corporate worship services. However, the writer is aware that learned and accustomed behaviors are changed through love, empathy, positive reinforcement, and education.

God mandated that God's people worship God in 2 Kings 17:39a, which reads as follows: "(But) you shall worship the LORD your God." This verse reveals that worshipping God is not optional for Christians. The writer is concerned that Harris Memorial CME Church is not praising and worshipping God as prescribed by Jesus in Matthew 22:37, which reads as follows: (He said to him,) "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." Praise and worship that is pleasing unto the Lord is passionate and involves one exalting the Lord and showing adoration and love towards God with their whole being (heart, soul, mind, and body). Thus, worship that is conservative, restrained, unemotional, or limited to a cognitive experience is displeasing to the Lord.

Praise and worship experiences are shaped by persons' lived experiences and diversity variables, such as race, gender, class, age, religion, and denomination. Thus, the specific reasons people praise and worship and the manner in which persons praise and worship are related to their individual lived experiences, diversity variables, and exposure to corporate praise and worship. In order for people to have a meaningful experience during corporate worship services, clergy and worship leaders must take into account the worshipping community's diversity variables, life experiences, and needs during worship planning and implementation.

The congregation at Harris Memorial CME Church includes significantly more female members than male members. This appears to be consistent with research that suggests that black women represent approximately seventy five percent of congregations in the Black Church.¹ Thus, the writer asserts that the health and life of the Black Church resides in black women. This is not to say that males and children's health is not important to the overall health of the church, but it is to demonstrate that the Black Church will not be healthy if such an important part of it is not provided with worship experiences and ministries that meet their unique needs.

This ministry model was specifically developed to meet the praise and worship needs of the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church. Therefore, black women's collectivistic nature, reliance on faith, prayer, and Jesus to get them through their daily stressors was taken into consideration during the development of this ministry model. Likewise, black women's experiences with oppression, emotional distress, and struggles

¹ Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Theological Ethics*, eds. Katie Geneva Cannon, Emilie M. Townes, and Angela D. Sims (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 50.

with low self-esteem and low self-confidence were considered during the development of this ministry model.

Womanist Model

Womanist theology and theory were utilized to conceptualize black women's praise and worship experiences and to develop the current ministry model. Thus, the womanist perspective is described below. Womanist theory and theology were birthed in the late 1980s.² Womanist theory is shaped by black women's lived experiences, whereas womanist theology focuses on black women's perspectives on the Holy Trinity, religion, and theology."³

According to Alice Walker, a womanist is "outrageous, audacious, and courageous" and "wants to know more and in greater depth." She celebrates women's passion and vigor and is "committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people."⁴ Womanists are generally black women. However, other women may relate to Alice Walker's definition of a womanist and may be liberated and empowered by womanist theology and theory. Jacqueline Grant identified a womanist as a black woman who endures the oppression of racism, sexism, and classism in the American society and the

²Stephanie Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 5.

³Marsha I. Wiggins and Carmen Williams, *Injustice And The Care Of Souls: Taking Oppression Seriously In Pastoral Care*, Eds Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook and Karen B. Montagno (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2009), 46.

⁴Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Garden* (Orlando, FL: Harvest Book, Harcourt, Inc., 1983), xi.

Black Church.⁵ Oppression occurs when one group is given unwarranted power and privilege over a marginalized group by virtue of both groups' characteristics and status.

Relationship Between Praise And Worship

Praise and Worship are two commonly confused constructs in the Christian Church since praise and worship look and sound similar (i.e., clapping, singing, and making comments such as, *Thank You Jesus*) to onlookers. Christians also confuse praise and Worship because many churches refer to praise and worship simultaneously or speak of them as though they are mutually inclusive. However, worship may appear more intense as persons engaged in worship may be more focused on the inside or on God than on others. Persons actively engaged in worship tend to feel something beyond themselves or a change that overcomes them within their bodies, hearts, souls, spirits, and/or minds. Worship may include overt behaviors such as, crying, hand waving, rocking or swaying back and forth, looking upward to God, and closing one's eyes while praying or reflecting on the goodness of God.

Although praise and worship look and sound similar, the two constructs may be differentiated in that praise occurs when Christians give thanksgiving unto God and worship occurs when Christians feel and experience the presence of God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit within them or within their midst (John 4).⁶ Thus, praise may prompt worship and evolve into worship.

⁵Jacquelyn Grant, *White Women's Christ And Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology And Womanist Response* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), 205.

⁶Donald Hilliard, *Church Growth From An African American Perspective* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2006), 85.

Authentic, Passionate, And Unapologetic Praise

The black women of Harris Memorial CME Church tend to restrain overt forms of praise, such as hand clapping, arm waving, feet stomping, standing, and shouting words of praise, such as *Halleluiah* during weekly worship services. The writer knows that the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church have praise within them for God because they regularly attend worship services and participate on various boards and ministries (i.e., prayer band, Christian Youth Fellowship, choirs, praise team, praise dancers, board of Christian education, Bible study). However, she discerns that they need the praise that they have within to be nurtured and promoted by clergy. She further discerns that the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church need a black woman to model authentic, passionate, and unapologetic praise in their presence so that they will become confident to praise God in their own way at all times. Moreover, the writer believes that the women's concealed praise will be liberated if they are educated about praise and empowered to praise God in their own way.

The writer believes that the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church are guarded in their praise due to learned behavior and their fear of being criticized for their style of praise due to their membership in a traditional Methodist congregation and the gossip and judgment that floods the church. Timothy Nelson conducted qualitative research at Eastside Chapel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in South Carolina on praise and worship. He reported that some congregants judged those who freely praised God during corporate worship services as either acting or being inauthentic

or as genuinely feeling the presence of the Holy Spirit.⁷ Similar judgment occurs at Harris Memorial CME Church.

The writer knows that the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church have plenty to be thankful for and are vocal in other aspects of their lives. Renita Weems' statement expresses the writer's sentiment.

Like lots of other women, I have no qualms about yelling when I'm in pain or when I'm in danger. But I'm completely bashful and self-conscious about screaming out in joy and thanksgiving to God when the pain abates or the danger subsides.⁸

This self-consciousness that black women, such as Renita Weems, experience is likely due to stereotypes that are commonly made about black women being too loud, dramatic, or ghetto. It is important that the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church become confident in praising God in their own way during corporate worship experiences because praise frees a person's mind from daily distracters and opens a person's heart to the ever-present God. Genuine praise is an experience that the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church should experience because praise is empowering and liberating to both the one engaged in praise and the ones who witness praise. This is because true praise is contagious and excites the felt presence of God, who loves to be praised.

A biblical model of praise is found in Exodus 15:20-21, which reads as follows:

Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing.²¹ And Miriam sang to them: Sing to the LORD, for

⁷Timothy J. Nelson, *Every Time I Feel The Spirit: Religious Experience and Ritual in an African American Church* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2005), 151-161.

⁸Renita J. Weems, *Showing Mary: How Women Can Share Prayers, Wisdom, And The Blessings Of God* (New York, NY: Warner Books, Inc., 2002), 191.

he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.

In Exodus 15:20-21, the prophet Miriam led the women in praising God after God intervened on the Israelites' behalf and enabled them to cross the Red Sea while their enemies drowned. Likewise, the writer/minister led the women of Harris Memorial CME Church in praising God throughout this ministry model and empowered them to become models of praise to others. This model of praise directs black women to praise God through it all and demonstrates that praise is a communal and overt act. Exodus 15:20-21 is meaningful to black women, who relate to the Israelites' history of oppression and newfound freedom from captivity due to their ancestors' history of slavery, their experiences with oppression, and their faith in God to deliver them from their trials and tribulations.

Exodus 15:20-21 is a model of praise that guides women to praise God immediately after God has brought them through. This model of praise describes various ways of praising God, such as singing, dancing, playing instruments, giving testimonies, and leading others in praising God. This praise model and ministry model empowers the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church to praise God genuinely with no reservations or concern about others' perceptions of their style of praise to God.

Celebration is a form of praise within the Black Church. In celebration, congregations rejoice in the goodness of the Lord. Although celebration may occur at any time during worship services, a specific form of celebration occurs at the end of sermons in the Black Church. During celebration, preachers tend to become animated and their voices tend to get louder or stronger. Some preachers sing, shout, or *whoop* or intonate their voice during the celebration period. This is because many preachers feel the

presence of the Holy Spirit during the celebration aspect of the sermon. At the time of celebration, many preachers emphasize the content in the previous parts of the sermon and/or focus on the highpoint of the sermon or the point in which God delivered the biblical character from a trial or tribulation. However, there are preachers who celebrate material that was not preached about during the sermon. For example, it is not uncommon to hear preachers put Jesus on the cross or speak of what God has done for well-known biblical characters during the celebration phase of the sermon.

Frank Thomas defined celebration as “the culmination of the sermonic design, where a moment is created in which the remembrance of a redemptive past and/or the conviction of a liberated future transforms the events immediately experienced.”⁹ Frank Thomas’ definition of celebration is rather complex. His definition suggests that celebration occurs when a preacher reflects on that which God has brought God’s people through. The writer’s definition of celebration is user-friendlier. She defines celebration as the climatic conclusion of a sermon in which the preacher emphasizes the good news of the gospel of Jesus with passion and excitement.

Frank Thomas suggested that preachers remain focused on the theme of the sermon during celebration and avoid preaching about new concepts during the celebration moment. He suggested that preachers be personally convicted by the sermon content. This ensures that the celebration is genuine and prompts the congregation to join in on the celebration. Frank Thomas suggested that preachers utilize affirmative themes, such as deliverance and salvation, during celebration. Additionally, he suggested that preachers time celebrations at the appropriate time to ensure that the celebration is

⁹Frank A. Thomas, *They Like To Never Quit Praisin’ God: The Role of Celebration in Preaching* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1997), 31.

climatic. Frank Thomas stated that any material (i.e., poetry, music, stories, and testimonies) might be utilized during celebration.¹⁰

The writer was personally convicted by the messages of the sermons prior to delivering the preached word in this ministry model. Thus, she modeled authentic, passionate, and unapologetic praise through the use of celebration during sermon delivery.

Poetry was utilized in this ministry model. The writer believes that poetry makes the content of sermons come alive. She believes that poetry is inherently spiritual and thus may be used as a vehicle to reach people and minister to people. Thomas Troeger provided rationale for utilizing poetry during sermon delivery. For example, he stated that poetry fosters empathy in the hearer and reader and assists preachers with articulating aspects of Christianity and spirituality. Thomas Troeger suggested that preachers provide congregations with a copy of poetry that they utilize during their sermons to enable the congregations to read them during the sermon.¹¹ The writer provided the women of Harris Memorial CME Church with all of the poems utilized in this ministry model.

Worship

In order for black women to worship authentically, passionately, and unapologetically, they need to have a full understanding of what worship entails. Sadly, George Barna found that 66% of Christians were unable to define worship in a

¹⁰Ibid., 90-97, 99.

¹¹Thomas H. Troeger, *Wonder Reborn: Creating Sermons on Hymns, Music, And Poetry*. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010),127.

nationwide random sample of 1003 adults in 1997.¹² As a tool of empowerment, the participants in this ministry model were prompted to define worship for themselves. To ensure that the women had an understanding of worship, the facilitator/writer also defined worship during the ministry model.

It is essential that the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church have a supernatural encounter during their worship experiences in order for them to worship authentically, passionately, and unapologetically. Unfortunately, some people are not spiritually in tuned and thus are limited to an intellectual or religious perspective of worship and the Holy Trinity. This is consistent with George Barna's finding in 1997 that fifty percent of people who attended an average of more than twenty four worship services in the previous year admitted that they had not experienced the presence of God during the previous year.¹³ The writer emphasized the presence of God and Jesus throughout this ministry model in order for the women to make strong associations between the presence of the Holy Trinity and worship. Although the Holy Spirit was not emphasized during this ministry model, the Holy Spirit's presence was felt.

Developing Womanist Worship Experiences

The purpose of this ministry model is to empower black women to praise and worship authentically, passionately, and unapologetically. Therefore, the women were provided with a variety of worship opportunities during this ministry model. One such worship opportunity was three *womanist worship experiences*. Briefly, the writer defines

¹²George Barna, *Experience God In Worship* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, Inc., 2000), 15.

¹³Ibid., 14-15.

a womanist worship experience as a time in which black women intentionally gather together to praise and worship the Holy Trinity. Womanist worship experiences will be described in greater detail later. For now, it suffices to mention that womanist worship experiences are developed specifically for black women. The term *service* is not used because the emphasis of the womanist worship experiences are on experiencing God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the self, and the community of women. Therefore, agendas, programs, and rituals are not the focus of womanist worship experiences. Below are models that assisted the writer with developing womanist worship experiences.

Since *worship wars* exist at Harris Memorial CME Church, the writer sought to avoid conflict regarding the womanist worship experiences amongst the women. Conflict regarding worship at Harris Memorial CME Church is present because members of the church disagree about how worship should look, sound, and feel. There are persons at the church who view "contemporary worship" or new styles of worship as shallow, too radical, or unnecessary, whereas others view traditional worship or common styles of worship as outdated and unable to reach and spiritually feed persons at the present age.¹⁴

The focus of worship should not be on whether it is contemporary or traditional or if it is made for the young or the old. Instead, worship experiences should follow the lead of the Holy Spirit and exalt the Lord. The writer followed the lead of the Holy Spirit in developing and implementing womanist worship experiences. She perceived that most of the women's worship needs would be met if worship services flowed under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

¹⁴Jason Vickers, *Minding The Good Ground: A Theology for Church Renewal* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 55, 57.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 59.

Conflict was an emphasis of one of the womanist worship experiences due to the women's involvement in ongoing conflict at Harris Memorial CME Church. In order to facilitate healing from ongoing conflict, participants were made aware that God is in the midst of their conflicts and bruised relationships. This served to remove the burden of conflict from participants and to prompt them to go to Christ in prayer when they are in the midst of conflict.

Altar call prayer served as a time in which the women gathered together to pray about the conflicts that occur within the gathered community of women.¹⁶ The women were reminded of Jesus' unconditional love for them and prompted to forgive each other during various aspects of the worship experience, such as the sermon, prayer, and litany.¹⁷ A pertinent scripture involving conflict¹⁸ was utilized to highlight an effective way of resolving conflict from a Christian perspective.

In order for worship experiences to be worthwhile to a worshipping community, laypersons should be actively involved in worship. According to George Barna, clergy should encourage congregations to pray, read the Bible, and have private devotional times with the Holy Trinity in addition to weekly worship experience in order to enhance congregations corporate praise and worship experiences.¹⁹ The women in this ministry

¹⁶Kathleen Smith, *Stilling the Storm: Worship and Congregational Leadership in Difficult Times* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006), 32.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 152-155.

¹⁸Robert Schnase, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations: Radical hospitality, Passionate worship, Intentional faith development, Risk-taking mission and service, Extravagant generosity* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 30.

¹⁹George Barna, *Experience God In Worship* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, Inc., 2000), 27.

model were prompted to engage in private worship through the use of a prayer journal to get them in a worshipping spirit.

According to William Willimon, laypersons should be encouraged to pray, read scripture, and collect the offering during corporate worship experiences in order to make worship an active experience for congregations.²⁰ The laywomen in this ministry model were given active roles during the womanist worship experiences in order to engage the women and demonstrate that each woman is a necessary part of worship experiences.

Each aspect of a corporate worship experience should prompt praise and worship from a community of believers. George Barna and Harry Jackson provided four building blocks for developing worship experiences, which are “effective use of music, strong leadership by a music director or team, effective use of biblical teaching or preaching, and consistent congregational engagement and response.”²¹

Music is an integral aspect of the corporate worship experience at Harris Memorial CME Church. It represents a time in the worship experience in which the Spirit of the Lord is experienced and in which the congregation is prompted to reflect on the goodness of the Lord and participate in the worship experience. This is consistent with George Barna and Harry Jackson’s statement that music facilitates a congregation’s ability to experience God.²² Songs that prompted praise and/or worship were included in the womanist worship experiences.

²⁰William H. Willimon, *A Guide To Preaching and Leading Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 8-9.

²¹George Barna and Harry R. Jackson, Jr. *High Impact African American Churches: Leadership Concepts From Some Of Today’s Most Effective Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2004), 94-103.

²²*Ibid.*, 96-97.

Sermons should be specifically developed to meet the needs of a worshipping community. This enables worshippers to internalize sermon content and utilize it in their daily lives. The sermons created for the womanist worship experiences were developed with the women in mind.

Worship should be an active experience versus a passive experience. Thus, worshippers should come to church as though celebrating the goodness of God than as though attending a lecture or funeral. Therefore, the interactive nature of praise and worship was emphasized during this ministry model.

To nurture and promote authentic, passionate, and unapologetic praise and worship in the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church, the writer provided the women with experiential and educational experiences related to praise and worship.

Donald Hilliard suggested the following with regards to worship planning and teaching:

1. Preach and teach about the nature, purpose, theology, dynamics, and methods of worship.
2. Train all church leaders to become enthusiastic personal worshippers.
3. Encourage all church members to become enthusiastic personal worshippers.
4. Establish a worship committee council to evaluate the church's current worship level, practices, and methods to make recommendations for change or improvements.
5. Conduct congregation worship polls or surveys.
6. Consider broadening the range or style of worship music.

7. Consider starting an additional alternative worship service that is based on a different approach to worship and a different style of worship music from your primary source.
8. Commit to excellence in every aspect of worship.
9. Be eclectic.²³

The women were exposed to various styles of praise and worship (i.e., prayer, testimony, poetry, singing, and dancing) during this ministry model. This served to increase the women's passion about praise and worship and to demonstrate that there are various ways of praising and worshipping God and Jesus. Questionnaires were given to determine whether or not the womanist worship experiences effectively met the praise and worship needs of the participants.

In order for womanist worship experiences to be worthwhile for black women, they must be developed to meet the unique needs of black women in general and the needs of the specific women in this ministry model.

Melva Wilson Costen provided guidelines for worship planning for contextual worship experiences. Her guidelines are as follows:

1. Consider the lived experiences of worshippers and their understanding of worship.
2. Consider the worship space.
3. Become familiar with your denominational polity and theology of worship to determine what elements are required and what your denomination believes about each of the elements.
4. Use Scripture to undergird the entire worship event.

²³Donald Hilliard, *Church Growth From An African American Perspective* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2006), 90-92.

5. Consider the flow of the service to determine what pattern facilitates worship in the particular congregation.
6. Take care that the language of the liturgy is inclusive.²⁴

Inclusive language was utilized by the writer throughout this ministry model. For example, the writer referred to God as God versus a specific gender. The scriptures related to praise and worship served as the foundation for each of the womanist worship experiences. The womanist worship experiences were adjunct worship experiences to the corporate worship experiences at Harris Memorial CME Church. The focus of the womanist worship experiences was to provide women with intimate worship experiences that prompt authentic, passionate, and unapologetic praise and worship. Thus, the CME denominational polity and rituals were not strictly adhered to during the womanist worship experiences.

Empowering Black Women

Empowerment is a common word in the secular world that is now being heard more and more in church. As the word suggests, empowerment enables one to perceive that they have power in a given situation. Empowerment requires that one has a change in their thought process and/or purposefully engage in an activity to increase self-esteem, self-confidence, or one's sense of competence. Empowerment is the opposite of feeling demoralized, defeated, hopeless, or stuck. Thus, black women often need to be empowered due to the deleterious impact that oppression has on their self-esteem and self-confidence.

²⁴Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship*, updated ed. (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2007), 120-121.

Given black women's experiences with oppression and demoralization, they are empowered when they successfully make their own decisions and regain control of their lives from people who had unmerited power over them. According to Teresa Fry Brown, "empowered women speak when they need to, decide what they believe, stand where they feel comfortable, wear what they choose, decide where to go, and affirm themselves instead of waiting for a committee report."²⁵ This view of empowerment promotes resistance in black women who have lost their sense of self and voice in society, church, and familial, platonic, and romantic relationships. An objective of this ministry model is to empower the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church to be resistant to subtle and explicit messages that tell them to conceal their authentic praise and worship during corporate worship experiences.

Black women have an intrinsic desire to persevere in the midst of oppression. Therefore, they are liberated when they name and challenge the Black Church's microcosm of sexism, classism, and internalized racism. Moreover, they are empowered when they define themselves and challenge and change unjust social institutions that black people commonly encounter.²⁶ Therefore, black women should be afforded the opportunity to name their perceptions of the injustices within the Black Church. In this ministry model, the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church were prompted to discuss their perception of what hinders them from praising God.

²⁵Theresa L. Fry Brown. *Can A Sistah Get A Little Help: Encouragement for Black Women in Ministry* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2008), 44.

²⁶Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (New York, NY: Routledge Classics, 2009), 291-292.

Empowering Worship Experiences

Since religion and/or Christianity are an important aspect of black women's lives, they tend to seek empowerment from sermons, prayers, fellowship, and pastoral care or counseling. Melva Costen Wilson suggested that congregations are empowered when preachers "embody biblical characters" during the spoken word.²⁷ However, empowerment occurs when the biblical characters chosen are female for an all female body of believers as in this ministry model or both female and male biblical characters are chosen for a typical congregation. Also, empowerment occurs when the biblical characters are described as having positive characteristics for which congregants can relate to. Empowerment is unlikely to occur if a biblical character is described in a sexist or oppressive manner. For example, if the emphasis of a sermon about the woman with the issues of blood was on her impurity versus her faith, the sermon would not be empowering to most women. In order to empower the women in this ministry model, the writer chose female biblical characters that she relates to and that personify praise and/or worship.

Since black women are communal in nature and are part of a collectivistic culture, they are commonly empowered by one another.²⁸ In order to empower the women in this ministry model, the women participated in group activities during the workshop, made testimonies, prayed together while holding hands during the altar call, and put together a prayer book for all of the participants to use as a prayer-aide.

²⁷Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship*, updated ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 116.

²⁸Stephanie Y. Mitchem. *African American Women: Tapping Power And Spiritual Wellness* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2004), 27.

According to Melva Costen Wilson, empowerment occurs during corporate worship experiences when worshippers perceive that they belong to the Body of Christ and when they develop a personal relationship with God.²⁹ All of the women in this ministry model were valued and encouraged to participate in the praise and worship experiences and group activities. An emphasis was placed on Jesus and women in order to emphasize how important women are to Jesus and therefore the Body of Christ. An affirmation was utilized during the womanist worship experiences to reinforce that even the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church were created perfectly in the image of God and thus were made to praise God (Psalm 139:14).

Luke 8:44-46 serves as a model of empowerment. Luke 8:44-46 reads as follows:

She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his clothes, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. Then Jesus asked, Who touched me? When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and press in on you." But Jesus said, Someone touched me; for I noticed that power had gone out from me.

This scripture demonstrates that women initiate empowering experiences and actively participate in their own empowerment. Thus, empowerment is not merely something that is done to a person. It involves more than a lecture, motivational speech, or educational sermon. Instead, empowerment is something that occurs when a person is encouraged and motivated to gain power over a situation and is provided the opportunity to voice their perceptions regarding a matter and/or demonstrate their newly acquired skill or ability. From this scripture, black women are reminded that one of their primary sources of empowerment is Jesus and that they may be empowered whenever they seek

²⁹Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship*, updated ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 109.

him. God and the Holy Spirit are the other two primary sources of empowerment for black women.

During this ministry model, the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church were encouraged to remain faithful unto Jesus and to seek him when they are oppressed, demoralized, misunderstood, or overwhelmed. This is consistent with Carlyle Fielding's statement that "the essence of empowerment is to help people understand that with Christ they can become the catalysts for their own spiritual and social transformation."³⁰

Authenticity In Black Women

According to Stephanie Mitchem,

Black women are told through many means that they must conform to standards, that their reputations as women are open for public discussion, and that their own communities may stand in judgment.³¹

Stephanie Mitchem's statement underscores the fact that black women are oppressed and scrutinized in their daily walk. Unfortunately, this occurs within the Black Church, black community, black media, and mainstream America. Therefore, it should be of no surprise that black women are sometimes avoidant or resistant to sharing their true selves with a world that misconstrues them. The black women at Harris Memorial CME Church may be resistant to praising and worshipping God overtly during corporate worship experiences due to their perception that others are watching their every move

³⁰Carlyle Fielding Stewart III, *The Empowerment Church: Speaking a New Language for Church Growth* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 26.

³¹Stephanie Y. Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 9.

and ready to criticize them for anything that they do that seems to be eccentric or outside of the norm of typical praise and worship at Harris Memorial CME Church.

In order to assist black women with being authentic during their praise and worship experiences, one must seek to understand black women's everyday struggles with being authentic. Kumea Shorter-Gooden and Charisse Jones studied the impact of racism and sexism on black women with 333 black women ages 18 to 88 from eighteen states through the use of open-ended surveys and interviews with seventy one black women ranging in ages from 18 to 80.³² They introduced the concept of "shifting," which occurs when black women are pressured to accommodate or change themselves based on a given environment due to racial, sexual, and class oppression in the United States.³³ The writer perceives that shifting is a real phenomenon in black women who seek to be understood and accepted by mainstream America, the black community, and the Black Church. She argues that the black women at Harris Memorial CME Church engage in shifting when they hold back their true praise and worship during corporate worship experiences.

Kumea Shorter-Gooden and Charisse Jones found that ninety seven percent of the black women acknowledged that they were aware of negative stereotypes of black women and eighty percent confirmed that they have been impacted by racist and sexist stereotypes.³⁴ Ninety percent of the black women stated that they have experienced discrimination. Sixty percent of the black women stated that they have experienced

³²Charisse Jones and Kumea Shorter-Gooden, *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America* (New York, NY: Perennial, 2003) 4-5.

³³Ibid., 7.

³⁴Ibid., 6.

discrimination based on their gender. Fifty eight percent of the black women indicated that they have changed the way they act in order to fit in or be accepted by white people. Seventy nine percent of the black women said that they have changed the way they speak, toned down their mannerisms, talked about what they perceived white people were interested in, and avoided controversial topics. Sixty nine percent of black women said that they have experienced racial or gender discrimination at work. Forty percent of the black women reported that they have down played their abilities or strengths with black men.³⁵

Kumea Shorter-Gooden and Charisse Jones reported that black women have left churches due to their perception that they are treated like “second class citizens” in church.³⁶ These results highlight the need for the Black Church to name the injustices against black women in the Black Church and to earnestly work towards resolving oppression against black women in the Black Church.

The writer believes that this knowledge base will enable clergy to better minister to the needs of black women. Overall, Kumea Shorter-Gooden and Charisse Jones’ qualitative research highlights the need for black women to be empowered to be authentic across settings. The women in this ministry project briefly talked about their views of black women and the stereotypes of black women during the praise and worship empowerment workshop.

Thankfully, Jesus loves all people and sees beyond race, gender, and class. John 4:7-9 reads as follows:

³⁵Ibid., 8-9.

³⁶Ibid., 263.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, Give me a drink. (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria? (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.

John 4:7-9 suggests that Jesus wants to share the gift of salvation with everyone regardless of the prejudices that society has against them. This should reassure black women that Jesus loves them unconditionally and wants to give them the gift of salvation. John 4:7-9 may be utilized to inspire black women to be genuine in the presence of their Lord and Savior.

Authentic Worship Experiences

Unless people deeply understand the purpose of worship, they are likely to lose interest in the act and to engage in sloppy, halfhearted interaction with God. Until they comprehend all that worship encompasses, they are likely to sit back in their comfortable chairs and watch a religious performance unfold before them. And if they haven't come with hearts that are seeking to connect with the heart of the Creator and to experience God in an intimate and powerful way, then they're not likely to persevere in the act of worshipping.³⁷

George Barna's comment is paramount in that it not only describes the congregation at Harris Memorial CME Church, but likely describes many other Christian churches in the United States. This comment suggests that people are not praising and worshipping the Holy Trinity as they ought during corporate worship experiences because they have not been taught by clergy the basic tenets and methods of worship. The

³⁷George Barna, *Experience God In Worship* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, Inc., 2000), 25-26.

women at Harris Memorial CME Church were educated about worship and its various purposes in order to inspire them to authentically praise and worship God and Jesus during corporate worship experiences.

Authentic worship occurs when people enter worship experiences with their true selves and earnestly seek Jesus. In order for authentic worship to occur at a given worshipping community, church members have to perceive that they are accepted and loved by their clergy and congregation. This is consistent with Melva Costen Wilsons' statement that "a sense of wholeness is facilitated when worshippers can bring all that they are to the beloved community and know that they will be appreciated and affirmed."³⁸ Therefore, the writer encouraged the women in this ministry model to be genuine before the Lord and before the Body of Christ.

It is difficult for one to have an authentic worship experience if they are concerned by others' perceptions of their style of praise and/or worship. Donald Hilliard defined "true worship" as one "putting aside fleshly carnal inhibitions and letting God be God without caring who sees."³⁹ He argued that persons who are serious about worship are unconcerned about being judged by others.⁴⁰ While the writer agrees with Donald Hilliard's sentiment, the writer is aware that each congregation has its own culture and certain styles of praise and worship are accepted while others are criticized at a given congregation. For example, some congregations may view it as a disruption if a person

³⁸Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship*, updated ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 66.

³⁹Donald D. Hilliard, *Church Growth From An African American Perspective* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2006), 88-89.

⁴⁰Ibid., 89.

fell out on the floor while *getting happy* or *shouting* during a worship experience while other congregations would view it as a norm.

Donald Hilliard argued that only those who have an intimate relationship with Jesus and are in God's will experience authentic worship.⁴¹ This statement suggests that Christians' relationship with Jesus is linked to the depth of their worship experiences. The writer agrees with Donald Hilliard that worship is strengthened when Christians are in God's will, but also believes that worship is overwhelming and transformative when Christians turn away from sin and turn towards God in the midst of worship. The woman at the well (John 4:1-42) and the woman with the alabaster jar (Luke 7:36-50) are great examples of the above.

John 4:21-24 serves as a biblical model of authentic worship. Unfortunately, it does not use inclusive language to describe God. However, its message is too relevant for this ministry model to not be discussed. Thus, womanists and others reading the scripture that prefer inclusive language should focus on the meaning more so than the language and/or substitute "Father" for "God" or "Mother/Father" and "him" for "God" or "him/her" in their individual reading of the scripture. John 4:21-24 reads as follows:

Jesus said to her, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

From this model of authentic worship, it is clear that authentic worship occurs anywhere that God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit are present. Thus, the woman at the well was

⁴¹Ibid., 85.

engaged in a worship experience as she was talking to Jesus at the well. With this insight, the writer had the praise and worship empowerment workshop at a location external to Harris Memorial CME Church. The discussion between Jesus and the woman at the well reveals to Christians that authentic worship occurs when worshippers worship God with the Holy Spirit within them, their spirit or breath, which was given to them by God,⁴² and with an open mind and heart to experience the presence of Jesus.

Authentic worship experiences take place when clergy and worship leaders have an intimate relationship with the Holy Trinity, understand the true nature of worship, and are cognizant of their worshipping communities' needs. According to George Barna, authentic worship occurs when effort is made in planning worship experiences, a specific purpose or theme is communicated, congregants are exposed to various types of worship experiences, and worship planners and worshippers are diligent about worshipping God.⁴³ There are various ways of worshipping the Holy Trinity.⁴⁴ Therefore, authentic worship is unique to each congregation. Thus, there is no specific formula for authentic worship. However, the writer discerns that authentic worship can be felt by those in its midst.

⁴²*The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary*. 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Harper One, 2011), s.v. *spirit*.

⁴³George Barna, *Experience God In Worship* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, Inc., 2000), 14-16.

⁴⁴Robert Schnase, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations: Radical hospitality, Passionate worship, Intentional faith development, Risk-taking mission and service, Extravagant generosity* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 42.

Passionate Black Women

The writer defines passion as an overwhelming desire that embodies a person's whole being and enables a person to feel alive and fulfilled in the moment. Passion is a power source for black women.⁴⁵ It enables them to be who they are destined to be.

In order for black women to praise and worship passionately during corporate worship experiences, they need to be given permission by clergy who understand them to praise and worship passionately and unapologetically.

Renita Weems encourages black women to be passionate and unapologetic in the following excerpt:

One day you stop being scared, one day you stop crying. One day you stop caring what other people think. One day you refuse to go back to being the timid, silent, apologetic, self-doubting woman who prefaced everything she had to say with, Maybe I'm wrong but...⁴⁶

Women in general and black women in particular are often criticized when they freely express their emotions and passion. Therefore, black women typically conceal their passion due to their history of being demoralized and oppressed, desire to be accepted, and their focus on fulfilling others' needs.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Patricia L. Hunter, *A Troubling In My Soul: Womanist Perspectives On Evil & Suffering*, ed. Emilie M. Townes (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), *Ibid.*, 192.

⁴⁶Renita J. Weems, *Showing Mary: How Women Can Share Prayers, Wisdom, And The Blessings Of God* (New York, NY: Warner Books, Inc., 2002), 172-173.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 191.

Passionate Worship Experiences

The writer recalls when a former pastor at Harris Memorial CME Church proclaimed that persons should not complain that worship experiences are boring. The writer understands the sentiment that the pastor was attempting to convey, yet is aware that inauthentic and constrained worship experiences may be boring. On the other hand, authentic worship is never boring because authentic worship is passionate worship (Matthew 22:37). When worship experiences are inauthentic, dull, or irrelevant to a particular Body of Christ, they become a boring weekly obligation versus something that is anticipated, freeing, and rewarding.

In Isaiah 29:13-14, God provides a rationale for passionate worship. Isaiah 29:13-14 reads as follows:

The Lord said: Because these people draw near with their mouths
and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me,
and their worship of me is a human commandment learned by rote;
so I will again do amazing things with this people,
shocking and amazing. The wisdom of their wise shall perish,
and the discernment of the discerning shall be hidden.

This scripture suggests that God is angered when Christians' worship out of obligation than out of desire and when their worship is overly ritualistic. God is so offended that people would not worship God out of a purity of heart that God would punish them by limiting what they learn, discern, and retain. Thus, this scripture suggests that people that do not worship God wholeheartedly will regress or feel stuck in their situations. Therefore, it is essential that people worship God from the core of their hearts in order to experience the full blessings that God has already created for them.

In Matthew 15:8-9, Jesus says that he is not pleased by passionless worship. Matthew 15:8-9 reads as follows:

This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.

In this scripture, Jesus asserts that worship is a waste of time if it does not come from a place of passion and sincerity. He further says that he is not impressed by worship that is solely based on rituals and rules. This scripture suggest that persons should not worship due to obligation, but should worship because they sincerely want to be in the presence of Jesus and want to worship him.

A model of passionate worship is found in Luke 7:36-39. Below is Luke 7:36-39.

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment.

The woman with the alabaster jar is a model of passionate worship. She demonstrates that passionate worship begins with one's preparation for worship and desire and follow-through to seek Jesus. She reveals that passionate worship involves one wholeheartedly focusing on Jesus once they are in his presence. She further reveals that one instantly becomes humbled and overwhelmed or in awe in his presence. The woman with the alabaster jar also demonstrates that passionate worship involves one honoring and adoring Jesus without pretenses, one feeling sorrowful due to their history of sinning and repent for sinning.

Luke 7:44-48 reveals that there are advantages of passionate worship. Below is

Luke 7:44-48:

Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

In this scripture, it is obvious that Jesus expects to be worshipped passionately.

Luke 7:44-48 demonstrates that worship in its purest form is a genuine display of love towards Jesus. It is evident in this scripture that the demonstration of "great love" for Jesus prompts Jesus to forgive one for their manifold sins.

The writer defines passionate worship as a worship experience in which one actively seeks Jesus, wholeheartedly focuses on Jesus, freely demonstrates love and affection towards Jesus, and honors Jesus with their heart, soul, spirit, mind, and body. Robert Schnase defined passionate worship as "an extraordinary eagerness to offer the best in worship, honoring God with excellence and with an unusual clarity about the purpose of connecting people to God."⁴⁸ This definition appears to be more academic than spiritual. It fails to capture the essence of passionate worship. However, Robert Schnase's definition makes it clear that passionate worship begins with the spiritual preparation and worship planning of clergy and worship leaders.

⁴⁸Robert Schnase, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations: Radical hospitality, Passionate worship, Intentional faith development, Risk-taking mission and service, Extravagant generosity* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 37.

Passionate worship experiences are specifically designed to meet the needs of a particular worshipping community and are not restricted to a specific worship style or location.⁴⁹ Therefore, passionate worship experiences may occur at a traditional church, such as Harris Memorial CME Church, or a contemporary church. Passionate worship experiences with black women provide them with a safe place where they can be themselves and experience and express their full range of emotions and reactions to the Holy Trinity and various worship experiences without being scrutinized.

According to Robert Schnase, passionate worship is led by female and male clergy when possible to increase the ability of congregants to relate to clergy and the Word of God.⁵⁰ If a church does not have female clergy, male clergy should utilize inclusive language and utilize feminine language in addition to masculine language to enable both genders to relate to the worship experience.

Passionate worship begins with the passion that embodies clergy and worship leaders. Thus, it is clergy and worship leaders' responsibility to consistently model passionate worship to their congregations.⁵¹ However, this does not remove the responsibility from spiritually mature laypersons to bring the Holy Trinity to church with them and to praise and worship passionately during corporate worship experiences. Modeling passionate praise and/or worship would prove more effective than scolding worship communities for not praising and/or worshipping God freely or passionately as is done at Harris Memorial CME Church. The modeling of passionate praise and/or worship

⁴⁹Ibid., 42-43.

⁵⁰Ibid., 37

⁵¹Ibid., 40-41.

by black female clergy and worship leaders is especially important when leading worship experiences with black women as they generally learn from each other and relate well with one another.

There is no specific prescription for passionate worship other than it should originate from the heart (Isaiah 29:13-14, Matthew 15:8-9) and a place of love (Luke 7:47). However, worshippers are usually actively engaged during passionate worship experiences. According to Robert Schnase, passionate worship is increased when members are encouraged to pray, fast, and read the Bible and devotionals outside of Sunday morning. Moreover, passionate worship occurs when there are minimal distractions and gaps in the worship experience, relevant sermons are preached, and stimuli that tap into the human senses are present.⁵² For example, hand holding involves the tactile sense.

Feminist Liturgy

Feminist theology is utilized in developing feminist liturgy. It asserts that women are a vital part of the Church.⁵³ Feminist theology was birthed from feminism, which seeks to liberate women from sexism.⁵⁴ According to Mary Collins, “feminist liturgy involves women in leadership roles, includes communal rituals that emphasize women’s

⁵²Ibid., 49-50.

⁵³Anne M. Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 28-29.

⁵⁴Ibid., 16.

roles in worship, and empowers worshippers.”⁵⁵ She asserted, “feminist liturgy aims to explore and celebrate a new order of ultimate relationships, one that is saving or redemptive for women insofar as it heals the destructive disorder wrought by patriarchal consciousness.”⁵⁶ Thus, feminist liturgy primarily focuses on liberating women from sexism. Therefore, it may not speak to the needs of the woman, who also endures isms, such as racism and classism.

Mary Collins provided five principles of feminist liturgy. She stated that feminist liturgies focus on redeeming relationships; involves women affirming women with an emphasis on women’s relationships with each other; focuses on women’s many identities or roles; avoids hierarchies and views each worshipping woman as equal. She also indicated that feminists are viewed as experts in feminist liturgies.⁵⁷

Feminist liturgy serves as a starting point to empowering women through worship experiences since all women may benefit from being affirmed and empowered through relationships with other women and all women should be given the same opportunities in worship as their male counterparts. Unfortunately, feminist liturgies do not meet the spiritual needs of all women as they typically include women in the middle class.⁵⁸ Thus, feminist liturgy is limited on the women with whom they are able to reach. Therefore, it is essential that worship experiences are designed to liberate and empower women with various diversity variables (i.e., class and race) beyond gender.

⁵⁵Mary Collins, *Women At Worship: Interpretations Of North American Diversity* eds. Marjorie Proctor-Smith and Janet R. Walton (Louisville, KY: Westminster /John Knox Press, 1993), 20-21.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 20.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 11-15.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 15.

Black Women's Worship Experiences

Black women's worship experiences are unique because black women bring who they are and their faith in God to worship experiences. Thus, it is important that worship experiences nurture who black women are and meet their praise and worship needs. In a national study, Charisse Jones and Kumea Shorter Gooden found that seventy five percent of the 333 black women they surveyed coped with their problems through prayer, faith, God, and church involvement.⁵⁹ Daphne Wiggins found in her research with the thirty eight black women of Layton Temple Church Of God In Christ and Calvary Baptist Church in Georgia that black women rated prayer as their favorite aspect of worship because "it was their time to seek God and unload their burdens."⁶⁰ These results suggest that faith in God and prayer are important aspects of black women's daily lives and that church provides them solace. Prayer was a major aspect of this ministry model as it is a common coping mechanism for black women.

Since black women have special praise and worship needs, it is essential that worship experiences speak to their hearts. According to Annie Powell, prayers, songs, scriptures, and sermons should utilize female images and metaphors to connect with black women during corporate worship experiences.⁶¹

Womanist Worship Experiences

⁵⁹Charisse Jones and Kumea Shorter-Gooden, *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America* (New York, NY: Perennial, 2003), 261.

⁶⁰Daphne Wiggins *Righteous Content: Black Women's Perspectives of Church and Faith* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2005), 39.

⁶¹Annie Ruth Powell, *Women At Worship: Interpretations Of North American Diversity* Eds. Marjorie Proctor-Smith and Janet R. Walton (Louisville, KY: Westminster /John Knox Press, 1993), 50.

According to Delores Williams, womanist worship is birthed from black women's perspectives on the Holy Trinity, the Bible, praise, worship, and the Black Church and their experiences with racism, sexism, and classism. She proclaimed that "womanist worship happens when African American women's experience is obvious in the leadership, liturgy, and god-talk of the church."⁶²

As stated previously, the writer defines womanist worship as times in which black women intentionally gather together to praise and worship the Holy Trinity. Furthermore, she defines womanist worship experiences as times in which black women are free to praise and worship the Holy Trinity in their own way. Womanist worship experiences may include only black women as demonstrated in the current doctor of ministry project or the entire congregation. Womanist worship experiences seek to liberate and empower black women and transform the Black Church and the black community from brokenness to wholeness. They also strive to build all persons up through praise and worship experiences and the proclamation of God's Holy Word.

Womanist worship experiences utilize inclusive language to enable black women to relate to a loving God and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Since traditional hymns and spirituals and traditional and contemporary gospel music are generally gender specific (referring to God as "he"), it is essential that music includes feminine language for which women can relate.⁶³

⁶²Delores S. Williams, *Women at Worship: Interpretation of North American Diversity*. eds. Marjorie Proctor-Smith and Janet R. Walton. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 215.

⁶³Ibid.

Womanist worship experiences are affirming, empowering, and liberating.

Womanist worship experiences with black women are interactive and communal in nature given the fact that black women are empowered by black women. They speak to the hearts, souls, spirits, and minds of black women and honor black women as an integral aspect of the Body of Christ. Womanist worship experiences as being authentic, passionate, and unapologetic. They specifically empower black women to love and embrace themselves, to be authentic at all times, and to be confident in who they are and what they do. Additionally, womanist worship experiences give black women the courage and permission to fully express their passions and experience their emotions.

Womanist worship experiences inform black women and others that there are various ways to honor and exalt God and Jesus. They empower black women and others to praise and worship the Holy Trinity in their own way and wholeheartedly focus on their experiences and relationship with the Holy Trinity.

The sermon from a womanist perspective is a point of healing and liberation for black woman. Womanist sermons involve celebration as discussed previously.⁶⁴ According to Elaine Flake, womanist sermons are empowering and focus on increasing black women's self-esteem.⁶⁵ She suggested that preachers deconstruct scriptures that are typically used in oppressive ways and re-conceptualize stories of biblical women in ways that empower black women and meet their needs. She also stated that black women are empowered when they positively relate to biblical characters.⁶⁶ Katie Cannon further

⁶⁴Ibid., 216.

⁶⁵Elaine M. Flake, *God in Her Midst: Preaching Healing To Wounded Women*. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2007), 21.

⁶⁶Ibid. 19-20.

suggested that preachers identify positive qualities of black Christian women when they preach to black women.⁶⁷ The writer chose female biblical characters that personified praise and worship and issues that black women commonly experience. She described the female biblical characters' initiative and/or faith and other positive attributes during her sermon delivery during the womanist worship experiences in order to empower the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church.

Testimonies are given during womanist worship experiences.⁶⁸ Testimonies are a powerful form of praise that is empowering and liberating to the one giving the testimony and the one listening to the testimony. John 4:28-30; 39 demonstrates the power of testimony. John 4:28-30, 39 read as follows:

Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he? They left the city and were on their way to him. Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, He told me everything I have ever done.

This scripture may be utilized to empower black women to use their voice as an instrument to bring others to Christ.

The focus of this ministry model was to empower black women to praise and worship authentically, passionately, and unapologetically. Thus, only black women were involved in the womanist worship experiences. However, one sermon was presented to the Whole Body of Christ at Harris Memorial CME Church to study whether or not black men could be reached, liberated, and empowered by a womanist sermon.

⁶⁷Katie Cannon, *Katie's Cannon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2008), 114, 120.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 222.

In conclusion, the current ministry model sought to liberate and empower the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church to praise and worship authentically, passionately, and unapologetically and to liberate and empower them overall.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The writer sought to liberate and empower the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church to praise and worship authentically, passionately, and unapologetically and to liberate and empower them overall through womanist worship experiences. Therefore, relevant historical, biblical, and theological foundations of authentic, passionate, and unapologetic praise and worship as it relates to black women are reviewed in this chapter in addition to liberation theologies.

Historical Worship

Biblical worship provides Christians with insight about how present day worshippers should praise and worship God. The Hebrew term for worship, *Khawah*, means “to bow down or to prostrate oneself.” The Greek word for New Testament worship, *proskyneo* has a similar meaning.¹ The Old Testament's theology of worship suggests that worshippers should humble and surrender themselves to God when they are in God's presence.

Worship was not meant to be done in isolation. Worshippers have been sharing the love of God with one another since the inception of humanity. In fact, Old Testament

¹*The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary*. 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Harper One, 2011), s.v. *Worship In The Hebrew Bible*.

worship was typically public. The sacrificial offering was the primary mode of worship in the Old Testament era. However, sacrifices were not limited to burnt offerings or animal sacrifices. Worshippers also offered themselves as living sacrifices to God.² In a similar vein, present day worshippers may give their all (heart, soul, mind, and body) to God during worship experiences and to commit or re-commit themselves to living in God's will.

Though there has been an age-old argument about the appropriateness of certain praise and worship methods, such as shouting and praise dancing, present-day worshippers may learn from Old Testament worshippers that worship was not meant to be sophisticated, but was designed to display adoration towards God. This is evidenced by the fact that worshippers in the Old Testament era shouted, clapped their hands, played musical instruments, danced, and sang during worship celebrations.³

According to the Harper Collins Bible Dictionary, Christians in the New Testament era worshipped God on a daily basis in the temple and home (Acts 2:46). New Testament worship included corporate prayer (Acts 1:14), teaching (Acts 2:42), and the sharing of a sacred meal (Acts 2:46). Worshippers during the New Testament period read the Bible (Lk 4:21); preached (Acts 5:42); prophesied and spoke in tongues (Acts 19:6); sang hymns (Lk 1:46-55; Mt 26:30), recited creeds (1 Cor 15:3-5); collected offerings (Lk 21:1-4), sang doxologies (Rom 16:25-27); and conducted the sacraments of baptism (Lk 3:3) and the holy communion (Mk 14:16-26).⁴

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

Corporate worship typically occurred in persons' homes during the New Testament era and the early Christian centuries.⁵ This suggests that worship may have been intimate and that women were involved in worship during the New Testament era and early Christian centuries. Corporate worship also occurred in basilicas or churches during the early Christian centuries. Worshippers stood during worship experiences in the early Christian centuries.⁶ However, they began sitting in pews in the fourteenth century.⁷

Preaching and music have been central to worship experiences for Christians since biblical times and the early Christian centuries. Similar to the present day, scriptures were exegeted during the early Christian centuries⁸ and sermons were relevant and practical during the middle ages.⁹ The singing of songs in unison¹⁰ facilitated unity amongst worshippers during the middle ages.¹¹ Likewise, congregational hymns and songs enable congregations to worship God corporately in the twenty first century.

Historical Praise And Worship With Women

Although worship is a sacred experience that both genders should be able to participate in equally, women have not always been afforded that opportunity. Women

⁵James F. White, *A Brief History Of Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 38, 72.

⁶Ibid., 72.

⁷Ibid., 101.

⁸Ibid., 69.

⁹Ibid., 9

¹⁰Ibid., 70.

¹¹Ibid., 100-101.

had limited roles in the worshipping community of the Old Testament due to the patriarchal societies of the ancient Near Eastern cultures and the Greco-Roman world.¹² However, Stanley Grenz asserted that women gathered for Israelite worship during the reading of the Torah (Dt 31:9-13; Neh 8:1-3), participated in tent meetings (Ex 38:8; 1 Sm 2:22), and offered sacrifices (Lev12:1-8; 1 Sm2:19).¹³

In spite of the oppression that women have endured in regards to worshipping in the Church, it is evident in Acts 1:14 that women were involved in worship experiences at the Pentecost Church. It is documented in Acts 1:14 that Mary the Mother of Jesus and “certain women,” who were unidentified, were in the upper room “constantly devoting themselves to prayer” following Jesus’ ascension to heaven. Likewise, Arthur Patzia asserted that women “responded to the proclamation of the gospel in the early church, received the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17-18, 37-38; Jl 2:28-32), and were baptized and regarded as equals with men in the worshipping communities throughout the empire (Acts 5:14, 8:3, 12, 9:2-3, 17:4, 12; Gal 3:27-28).¹⁴” Women in the early church were active in the life of the church. For example, Lydia, a businesswoman, had fellowship at her house following her conversion into Christianity (Acts 16:14) and Mary, the mother of John Mark, facilitated worship services in her home (Acts 12:12).¹⁵

Women were prevented from worshipping during the early Christian centuries due to the perception that women were of a lesser class than men and a general

¹²Arthur Patzia, *The Emergence Of The Church: Context, Growth, Leadership & Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001), 176.

¹³Grenz, Stanley, J. *Women In The Church: A Biblical Theology of Women In Ministry* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 66.

¹⁴Patzia, *The Emergence Of The Church*...177.

¹⁵Stanley, J. *Women In The Church*... 81.

misunderstanding of women's bodily functions. Women and men were segregated during public worship during the early Christian centuries.¹⁶ According to Susan White, the separation of women from men may have persisted into the fourteenth century in the West and the nineteenth century in the East.¹⁷

Women often sang in choirs, but were forbidden to sing in some circles because they were accused of singing at pagan feasts and with being involved with heretical groups.¹⁸ In the fourth century, women were not allowed to be near the altar or the chief celebrant.¹⁹ Women who were menstruating were excluded from corporate worship experiences for approximately one month and were not permitted to get baptized, participate in the Holy Communion, go to the altar, or pray amongst other women.²⁰

Historical Praise And Worship In The Black Church

Corporate worship experiences gave black slaves hope and a sense of freedom in the midst of oppression. Slaves were so passionate about worshipping God that they risked their lives to secretly meet with a community of slaves for corporate worship celebrations. These secret worship experiences became known as the invisible institution. The invisible institution was born in the Southern region of America and is the first

¹⁶James F. White, *A Brief History Of Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 72.

¹⁷Susan J. White, *A History of Women in Christian Worship* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2003), 49-50.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁹Teresa Berger, *Women's Ways of Worship: Gender Analysis and Liturgical History* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 19.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 18.

known context of corporate worship experiences for Black Americans. Black slaves kept their corporate worship experiences a secret because they wanted to worship their God freely without the eyes of their slaveholders upon them. For example, slaveholders and missionaries disapproved of slaves' dancing and playing drums during worship experiences.²¹

The invisible institution was given its name because the worship quarters for slaves were invisible and hidden from slaveholders. The corporate worship experiences were hidden by virtue of them occurring in cabins, woods, brush arbors and hush harbors (shelters made of cut branches),²² deep gullies, ravines, and swamps.²³

Pedrito Maynard-Reid and Melva Wilson Costen, respectively, provided insight on how slaves concealed the sounds in the invisible institution. Quilts and blankets were drenched with water and hung, large iron pots were filled with water, and preachers and worshippers spoke, prayed, and sang over iron pots to ensure that their voices were not heard outside of the hush harbor.²⁴ The iron pots were also inverted and propped by a rock or large stick or suspended upside down from large tree limbs to mute sounds from the outside. Worshippers also sang softly in huddles to maintain the secrecy of the invisible institution.²⁵

²¹Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid, *Diverse Worship: African American, Caribbean, & Hispanic Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 101.

²²Albert J. Raboteau, *Canaan Land: A Religious History Of African Americans*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 43.

²³Costen, *African American Christian Worship*... 25.

²⁴Maynard-Reid, *Diverse Worship: African American, Caribbean, & Hispanic Perspectives* 55.

²⁵ Costen, *African American Christian Worship*...27.

Black slaves' manner of praising and worshipping God suggests that they were mentally, emotionally, and spiritually free to worship God in their own way in spite of being physically bound to slavery. Much of the worship practices that were a part of the invisible institution continue to be a part of worship celebrations in black churches. Albert J. Raboteau provided information regarding slaves' worship practices in the invisible institution. Spirituals similar to "Steal Away to Jesus" were sung to covertly inform slaves of upcoming worship opportunities. Corporate worship experiences in the invisible institution included the reading or recollection of scripture, preaching, and prayer. Slaves sang spirituals, chanted, clapped their hands, stomped their feet, and danced in a counterclockwise shuffle, known as the shout.²⁶

Melva Wilson Costen and Pedrito Maynard-Reid, respectively, described songs created by slaves. Spirituals were birthed during the antebellum slave period by black slaves and are the first American folk songs. Spirituals conveyed information about the experiences and hopes of slaves.²⁷ They have been sung as a form of protest and as a way to signal the Underground Railroad. Spirituals also focused on black liberation in the 1950s and 1960s.²⁸

According to Melva Wilson Costen, the ring shout, developed in South Carolina, is a form of praise that has an African origin. Ring shouts lasted up to five hours and involved a form of praise dance in which black slaves shuffled around a circle with their

²⁶Albert J. Raboteau, *Canaan Land: A Religious History Of African Americans*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 46-48, 52.

²⁷Costen, *African American Christian Worship*...83-84.

²⁸Maynard-Reid, *Diverse Worship: African American, Caribbean, & Hispanic Perspectives* 79, 81.

shoulders close together while swaying their bodies to a slow pace and then gradually increasing their tempo.²⁹

Melva Wilson Costen also provided information regarding another era of worship in the black community. Praise houses were birthed in South Carolina and Georgia. They were the second context of corporate worship for Black Americans and are considered to be the first visible institution of corporate worship for Black Americans. White pastors initially supervised corporate worship celebrations in praise houses. However, black preachers supervised the praise houses once corporate worship within the black community was accepted by mainstream America. Corporate worship experiences in the praise houses occurred in cabins, barns, cotton houses, and small one-room buildings. Black slaves spoke Gullah, which is a combination of a West African language and the English language, during praise house worship celebrations.³⁰

The manner in which slaves worshipped in praise houses suggests that they were excited about worshipping God. For example, they tapped their feet, gave testimonies, clapped their hands, prayed, read scripture, preached brief sermons, and sang metered hymns, commonly known as Dr. Watts during praise house worship experiences.³¹ According to Melva Wilson Costen, Isaac Watts developed a common style of singing hymns in the Black Church called Dr. Watts. When hymns were sung through the Dr. Watts' method, worship leaders provided the congregation with one or two lines of the hymn to aide in the corporate singing of hymns.³²

²⁹Costen, *African American Christian Worship*...41-42.

³⁰Ibid., 39-42.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., 86-87.

According to Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid, gospel music is another form of music sang by black Christians. Thomas A. Dorsey in the northern region of America developed gospel music. This form of music focused on the good news as described in the Bible and the good news that black Christians experienced in God. Contemporary gospel music was formed in 1970 and reached persons outside of the four walls of the Church.³³

The invisible institution and the praise houses led to the development of the Black Church. The Black Church is an umbrella term that includes all churches that have a predominately black congregation. The Black Church was created in America due to inequality in the Church and society and black Christians' overwhelming need to praise and worship their God in their own way without being scrutinized by the mainstream culture.

History Of Praise And Worship With Black Women

There is a scarce amount of literature available regarding black women's history of praise and worship experiences. However, black women shared in black men slaves' praise and worship experiences. Thus, black women's history of praise and worship celebrations were included in the praise and worship experiences of black slaves in the invisible institution and praise houses as previously described. The minimal amount of literature in this area is likely due to the relative invisibility of black women in recounts of black slaves' practices in the United States and black women's enduring status of being at the bottom of the totem pole in the United States.

³³Maynard-Reid, *Diverse Worship: African American, Caribbean...* 81-83.

Fortunately, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes has added to the literature on black women's praise and worship history. According to Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, West African women were "priestesses and cult leaders" in Africa. The cultic services in West Africa included women and men and the African religions and practices included female gods and feminine images.³⁴ This is similar to the womanist worship style, as described in chapter two, in that womanist worship experiences utilize feminine imagery and feminine words to describe God.

Black slaves included women and men in their worship experiences.³⁵ Black women served as "worship leaders, preachers, catechizers, exhorters, prayer warriors, singers, teachers, and storytellers." During the last ten years of slavery, the worship experiences were not dependent on black male preachers or pastors. Instead, the responsibility of leading worship experiences, which included the exegesis of scripture, prayer, singing, and teaching, were shared by the community of slaves who had a special gift in a specific area of worship.³⁶

³⁴Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, *If It Wasn't For The Women* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 95.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 97.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 102

Christian Methodist Episcopal Church History

The development of the CME Church is reviewed below since the writer's context is a CME Church. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism,³⁷ was passionate about being in the presence of God. According to Retired Bishop of the CME Church, Othal Lakey, John Wesley began a movement with his brother, Charles Wesley, and friend, George Whitfield known as the "Evangelical Awakening" in Great Britain during the eighteenth century. The term Methodist was assigned to the denomination that John Wesley developed after he and three others were referred to as Methodists during "Holy Club" meetings, which included studying, prayer, and communion.³⁸ After hearing a layperson read Martin Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans on May 24, 1738, which stated that "the heart is cheered, elevated, and transported with sweet affection toward God," John Wesley wrote in his journal, "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." This well-known statement by John Wesley has been attributed to the "evangelistic revival" and the development and progress of Methodism in England and beyond.³⁹

According to Othal Lakey, John Wesley developed the annual conference to give Methodist preachers direction. The first annual conference of the Methodists was held on June 25, 1744 in the Foundry in London. Preachers were given appointments to societies

³⁷Othal Hawthorne Lakey, *The History Of The CME Church* (Revised) (Memphis, TN: The CME Publishing House, 1996), 74.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., 76.

(local churches) for six months to one year at the annual conference.⁴⁰ Traveling ministers reported on their spiritual and financial progress during annual conferences. Societies met during regional or district meetings on a yearly basis.⁴¹

Black slaves were important to the development of the Methodist Church. According to C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, John Wesley baptized his first two black converts on November 29, 1758 after conducting revivals and camp meetings in America. One of his black converts was a black woman. Black slaves were charter members of the first Methodist society in Frederick County, Maryland in 1764. A slave named, Aunt Annie, is listed on the roll of the first class.⁴²

On December 24, 1784, American Methodism was born at the "Christmas Conference" in Baltimore, Maryland. Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke were credited with developing the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) in the United States in 1784.⁴³ The term Episcopal was added to the name of the Methodist denomination due to the assignment of superintendents/bishops, elders, and deacons.⁴⁴

By 1828, 68, 264 black persons were members of the MEC. The majority of them were slaves that lived in the South. The MEC were separated into the northern region of America, which opposed slavery, and the southern region of America, which supported

⁴⁰Ibid., 77.

⁴¹Anne H. Pinn and Anthony B. Pinn, *Fortress Introduction To Black Church History* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 23-24.

⁴²C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 49-50.

⁴³Othal Hawthorne Lakey, *The History Of The CME Church* (Revised) (Memphis, TN: The CME Publishing House, 1996), 82-83.

⁴⁴Ibid., 84.

slavery, due to differences in Methodists' beliefs regarding black slaves.⁴⁵ The African Methodist Episcopal Church, which was developed in 1816 and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, which was developed in 1824,⁴⁶ developed from the free black persons in the northern region of America.⁴⁷

During a General Conference in 1844, the MEC was divided into the MEC and the MEC, South as a result of divergent views amongst the Methodists regarding the practice of slavery and the ownership of slaves by Bishop James O. Andrew. The first general conference of the MEC, South was held on May 1, 1846 in St. Petersburg, Florida. At the time of its inception, the MEC, South had sixteen annual conferences, 124,000 slave members, and 500,000 members in total.⁴⁸ Following the antebellum era, more slaves were members of Methodist denominations than any other Christian denomination.⁴⁹

In 1870, the MEC, South became known as the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. The denomination was given this name because its members were "colored" and they remained an entity of the MEC, South following slavery.⁵⁰ The CME Church was developed at Liberty Church in Jackson, Tennessee in 1870. The Church maintained the

⁴⁵Anne H. Pinn and Anthony B. Pinn, *Fortress Introduction To Black Church History* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 28-30.

⁴⁶Othal Hawthorne Lakey, *The History Of The CME Church* (Revised) (Memphis, TN: The CME Publishing House, 1996), 92-93.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 87-88.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 102-104.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 96

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 115.

Book of Discipline utilized by the Methodists.⁵¹ The word "Christian" replaced the word colored in the denomination's name in 1954 because the term colored was deemed derogatory and limited the denomination to black Christians.⁵² William H. Miles and Richard H. Vanderhorst were the first two bishops of the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church.⁵³

History of Praise And Worship Within The CME Denomination

John Wesley did not orchestrate Methodist worship celebrations to be overly ritualistic and non-feeling, but to include genuine expressions of praise and worship. Thus, it is not "Methodist" to be conservative in worship experiences as believed by Methodists and other Christian denominations. John Wesley had "watch night services" which began on Fridays and included singing, preaching, and prayer until midnight on Saturday and love feasts in which participants shared love with one another through the passing of bread and the shaking of hands, gave testimonies, and talked about their concerns and needs. These types of worship experiences were expressive and focused on "Christian conversion" and participants' relationships with God.⁵⁴

Methodist worship celebrations were not historically conservative. According to Anne Pinn and Anthony Pinn, the MEC's worship style "offended those who maintained

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Othal Hawthorne Lakey, *The History Of The CME Church* (Revised) (Memphis, TN: The CME Publishing House, 1996), 539, 541.

⁵³Ibid, 211.

⁵⁴Anne H. Pinn and Anthony B. Pinn, *Fortress Introduction To Black Church History* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 23-24.

the supremacy of high worship and the code of conduct embraced by the Methodist ministers and congregations were contrary to the socialization process and code of honor.”⁵⁵ Black Methodists were attracted to Methodism because it enabled them to worship freely and reminded them of their native land. They preferred to have separate worship celebrations from their masters so that they could worship without restraint. Black slaves were interested in becoming Methodists due to the Methodists’ baptism and the “importance of the felt presence of the Holy Spirit in Methodist services through shouting.” The sacrament of baptism and shouting reminded black slaves of their West African rituals.⁵⁶

Womanist Biblical Interpretation

Womanist biblical interpretation was utilized to explore foundational scriptures because the writer and her context are black Christian women. Womanist hermeneutics is unique from other biblical interpretations because it exegetes scripture from black women’s perspectives and lived experiences. Consistent with the womanist perspective, the writer utilized her experiences as a black woman and her interactions with black women in interpreting foundational scripture. Likewise, the writer interpreted scripture based on the perceived needs of the women of Harris Memorial CME Church.

The womanist hermeneutical approach is special because it examines the sociopolitical aspects of biblical text due to the patriarchal culture of biblical times⁵⁷ and the racism, sexism, and classism that exists in present day. Womanist biblical scholars are

⁵⁵Ibid., 25-27.

⁵⁶Ibid., 28-30

⁵⁷Michael Joseph Brown. *Blackening of the Bible: The Aims of African American Biblical Scholarship* (New York, NY: Trinity Press International, 2004), 90.

sensitive to the reality that biblical interpretation is impacted by persons' worldviews.⁵⁸

Hence, biblical texts have been consistently presented to black congregations with underlying and blatant sexist, classist, and racist ideologies.

Consistent with womanist theology, the writer deconstructed the derogatory interpretations of common female biblical characters,⁵⁹ such as the woman with the alabaster jar. With the purpose of liberating and empowering black women in mind, the writer also reconstructed scriptures involving female biblical characters, such as the woman at the well, that have been misconstrued from pulpits and Bible studies in the Black Church.

The Woman's Bible by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the *Women's Bible Commentary* edited by Carol Newsom and Sharon Ringe, and *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible* by Alice Ogden Bellis were utilized in addition to other Bible commentaries and sources to assist the writer in interpreting scripture from a womanist perspective. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible was utilized because it is more gender inclusive than other versions of the Bible and thus may be used to liberate and empower black women.

Brief Examination of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36

Womanist biblical interpretation utilizes scripture to liberate and empower black women similar to the manner in which black slaves utilized scripture to be liberated from oppression. Hence, womanists either solely focus on scriptures that are liberating and

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Katie G. Cannon. *Katie's Cannon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community*. (New York, NY: Continuum, 1995), 114.

empowering to black women or they deconstruct and reconstruct scriptures that have historically been oppressive to black women.

In line with the focus of worship in the current ministry project, it is worthy to note that 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 has been utilized to oppress women, prevent them from preaching in the Church, and to quiet their praise, worship, and involvement in the Church. 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 reads as follows:

As in all the churches of the saints, women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

This scripture is perplexing as versus 34 through 36 interrupt Paul's discussion about speaking in tongues and prophesying.⁶⁰ Additionally, 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 is contradictory to Paul's theology regarding women praying and prophesying in 1 Corinthians 11:5.⁶¹

According to Joseph Fitzmyer, there are five ways of interpreting 1 Corinthians 14:34-36. One such way to interpret the scripture is to assume that Paul was universally directing women to be "silent in the churches" or was correcting a specific group of women, who interrupted the worship service at the Corinthian Church in order to maintain order during worship. If this position is taken, it would be contradictory to Galatians 3:28, which suggests that women and men are equal in Jesus Christ. A second approach is to assume that versus 34 through 36 were written by Paul, but were as part of a different letter. Thus, verse 37 would follow verse 33a. A third interpretive strategy

⁶⁰Joseph A. Fitzmyer. *The Anchor Yale Bible First Corinthians: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 32. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 529.

⁶¹Ibid.

would be to assume that verses 34 through 36 were later interpolated into the text after Paul wrote the original text (1 Cor 14:26-33a and 1 Cor 14:37-40). A fourth way of interpreting the scripture would be to assume that the text was initially written as a note by Paul and was later added into the text. A fifth strategy would be to assume that verses 34 through 36 were quotes from Corinthian men, who opposed women speaking in the church. In this view, verse 36 would serve as Paul's reaction to the Corinthian men's quote. Joseph Fitzmyer asserts that the fifth manner of interpreting versus 34 through 36 is the most plausible in that it does not contradict with 1 Corinthians 11:5 or Galatians 3:28.⁶²

Beyond deciding whether or not Paul wrote verses 33b through 36, a womanist analysis of this scripture focuses on the socio-historical context of the Corinthian Church. Society at the time of the Corinthian Church was patriarchal. Thus, women were viewed as second class citizens in society. Likewise, the Corinthian Church's leadership or elders were exclusively or predominantly male. Hence, women were "subordinate" to men in the Corinthian Church.

The womanist interpretation of scripture explores and uplifts scriptures that support women's ordination and participation in praise and worship in the Church (Acts 1:14, Acts 2:17, Gal 3:28). For example, Acts 1:14 demonstrates to women that women were in the upper room of the Pentecostal Church; Acts 2:17 suggests that women were gifted with the Holy Spirit and with the ability to prophesy; and Galatians 3:28 suggests that women and men are equal in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the womanist analysis of scripture looks beyond the text and examines black women's conviction to preach, battle to get ordained, victories in getting ordained, struggles with being respected in ordained

⁶²Ibid., 529-530.

ministry, leadership roles in the Black Church, involvement in the Black Church, and their matriculation into seminary and graduation from seminary.

Consistent with womanist hermeneutics, the primary and secondary biblical foundation scriptures focus on God/Jesus' interaction with women. In order to liberate and empower the women of Harris Memorial CME Church to praise and worship authentically, passionately, and unapologetically, the writer explored scriptures that demonstrate that women praised and worshipped God in the Bible, that display God's manifestation in female biblical characters lives, and that presents Jesus' involvement and ministry with female biblical characters who praised and worshipped Jesus.

Soul Pour

The primary Old Testament biblical foundation is 1 Samuel 1:9-20. In 1 Samuel 1:1-8 Hannah experienced great emotional distress due to her inability to conceive a child (1 Sm1:5b) with her husband, Elkanah. her emotional distress was also related to the persistent taunting by Elkanah's second wife (1 Sm 1:2), Peninnah (1 Sm 1:6-7), who had sons and daughters (1 Sm 1:4) with Elkanah.

Hannah not only wanted a son to stop her nemesis from aggravating her, she also wanted a son to improve her status in Israel and to decrease the stigma that she experienced in society and in the temple. Hannah experienced stigma for not having any children because it was believed that God was punishing women who were unable to conceive a child for their sins or wrongdoings. In the Israelite society, a woman's class,

or status was based on her birthing a male child⁶³ as female children were undervalued and did not increase a family's status.

Elkanah was concerned about Hannah when she wept and refused to eat (1 Sm 1:7). He misperceived that his love for her would overshadow the overwhelming sadness that she felt for being unable to conceive children (1 Sm 1:8). Elkanah's misunderstanding of Hannah's emotional distress is linked to his maleness, the reality that his status was not impacted by Hannah's inability to conceive a child, the fact that he had male and female children with Peninnah, and his ability to have more children with Peninnah. Elkanah's insensitivity, Peninnah's constant taunting, and the stigma that she endured for not having any children resulted in Hannah feeling alone, anxious, demoralized, and misunderstood.

The key biblical foundation, 1 Samuel 1:9-20, is presented below. For clarity purposes, the scripture is explored by pericope. Below is 1 Samuel 1:9-11:

After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the Lord. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord, and wept bitterly. She made this vow: "O Lord of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head."

Hannah's actions and testimony empowers women to worship God authentically, passionately, and unapologetically in the midst of distress and in the presence of onlookers. She was intentional in praying to God at the temple. As she gave herself over

⁶³Alice Ogden Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 124.

to God, she focused wholeheartedly on her interaction with God. She was therefore not distracted by the presence of the priest, Eli.

Hannah was both authentic and passionate in her worship of God in that she did not conceal her true emotions in the presence of Eli or others at the temple. She was also authentic in her prayer by confessing her overwhelming need to the Lord. Hannah's prayer was a worship experience because she felt the presence of God, she confessed her unyielding service to God, and she offered her unborn son as a living sacrifice to God. In verbally offering her unborn son to God as a nazirite, Hannah praised God in advance for the miracle that God was performing within her. The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary defines a nazirite as consecrated people who became consecrated on their own or due to a parent's vow. In order to remain holy, nazirites have to abstain from alcohol and from getting their haircut and have to avoid dead bodies.⁶⁴

Below is 1 Samuel 1:12-18:

As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine." But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time." Then Eli answered, "Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him." And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your sight." Then the woman went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer.

Eli unjustly accused Hannah of alcohol consumption during her prayer to God. Though Hannah's explanation to Eli suggests that she sought approval and understanding from Eli, she models unapologetic worship for women because she did not offer an

⁶⁴*The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary*. 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Harper One, 2011), s.v. *Nazarites*.

apology to Eli regarding her prayer. Hannah likely explained herself to Eli due to the patriarchal society in which she lived and her respect for him as a priest. The women of Harris Memorial CME Church who praise and worship God overtly have been in Hannah's position as they attend a church that worships God conservatively.

Hannah's prayer to God demonstrates that one should pray to God intently and with the faith that God will provide for them. Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, states that prayer acknowledges the reality of God and gives the oppressed visibility.⁶⁵ Prayer is a basic form of praise and worship that can be taught to women, men, girls, and boys to engage in individually and collectively. As is evident in 1 Samuel 1:10-11, 20, prayers prompt divine intervention in a person's life.⁶⁶ This scripture demonstrates that a person's ability to experience God through prayer liberates and empowers them.

Hannah's pouring out of her soul during prayer to God was a passionate act. The Harper Collins Dictionary defines the soul as a "whole person or the self."⁶⁷ The writer defines the soul as the essence or core of a person. Thus, when Hannah poured out her soul, she gave God all that she was and all that she had. In pouring out her soul to God, Hannah was relieved of all of her emotional pain and was given peace and assurance that God had answered her prayer.

The writer defines *soul pour* as times in which a person lets go or releases that which is in the core of them. She conceptualizes a soul pour as involving a person emptying and pouring out their soul to God while authentically and liberally expressing

⁶⁵Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, *Exorcizing Evil: A Womanist Perspective on the Spirituals* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 161.

⁶⁶Myles Munroe, *Understanding The Purpose And Power Of Prayer: Earthly License For Heavenly Interference* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2002), 45.

⁶⁷*The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary*. 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Harper One, 2011), s.v. *soul*.

their emotions, needs, and desires. The writer believes that soul pour experiences are especially cathartic for persons who are guarded or do not readily experience or express their emotions and passion.

Soul pour may occur during a prayer of lament (1 Sm 1:10-20) and result in persons gaining a new sense of freedom and getting their needs met. Consistent with the concept of soul pour, Michael Youseff stated that "outward expressions of praise" that involves great emotion "are the most powerful means of emptying" oneself to God.⁶⁸ Consistent with the soul pour experience, bell hooks exclaimed that black women, who are guarded may "find a space to speak, to pour out their hearts' [soul's] longing, and in the act of praying, gain a sense of direction."⁶⁹

Soul pour experiences are necessary for liberation and growth. The writer has had soul pour experiences during times of happiness and sorrow. Her soul pour experiences have enabled her to experience the Holy Spirit and have resulted in poetry pouring from her soul. Moreover, the writer's soul pour experiences have enabled her to experience her emotional distress, leave her burdens with God, and seek and gain discernment and wisdom from God.

The writer is certain that the women of Harris Memorial CME Church have had soul pour experiences. Similar to Hannah, the women of Harris Memorial CME Church have been in conflict with others; have experienced internal conflict; and have felt lifeless, unfulfilled, misunderstood, demoralized, distraught, and alone. From Hannah, the

⁶⁸Michael Youseff, *Empowered By Praise* (Colorado Springs, CO: Water Brook Press, 2002), 69.

⁶⁹bell hooks, *Sisters Of The Yam: black women and self-recovery* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005), 144.

women of Harris Memorial CME Church learn that they may take all of their concerns to God through prayer and soul pour experiences.

Below is 1 Samuel 1:19-20:

They rose early in the morning and worshipped before the Lord; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, I have asked him of the Lord.

1 Samuel 1:19-20 demonstrates that God hears and answers prayers. After God met her need, Hannah worshipped God by giving her son as a sacrifice to God as she had promised in her soul pour experience (1 Sm 1:24). She praised God by naming him Samuel, "I asked him of the Lord (1 Sm 1:20)." Overall, 1 Samuel 1:9-20 is a primary Old Testament biblical scripture because it empowers women to pray and worship freely and demonstrates that God will liberate them from oppression and adversity.

Womanist Praise

One of the earliest examples of praise in the Bible comes from Prophet Miriam in Exodus 15:20-21. As stated in chapter two, Miriam led the women in praising God through song, dance, and instrumentation after God intervened on the Israelites' behalf and allowed them to cross the Red Sea while their enemies drowned. Exodus 15:20-21 is a secondary Old Testament biblical foundation to empower the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church to praise God in their own way and to lead their congregation in praising God. (Please see chapter two for additional information regarding the relevance of this scripture to black women.) Exodus 15:20-21 reads as follows:

Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. And Miriam sang to them: Sing to the Lord, for he

has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.

Miriam's ability to lead the women in praising God suggested that women led praise experiences during the Old Testament era. According to Drorah O'Donnell Setel, Miriam's status as a prophet suggests that women had authority positions in Israel.⁷⁰

Psalm 139:14 is also a secondary Old Testament biblical foundation. Psalm 139:14 reads as follows:

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

In this scripture, the psalmist David proclaims that he praises God because God made him "fearfully and wonderfully." Black women relate to this verse due to its poetic quality. This scripture comes to life when black women recite it in their own voice and internalize it. Therefore, this scripture serves as an affirmation for black women to reclaim themselves as "fearfully and wonderfully made" and to empower them to praise God in their own way.

Liberated Spirit

Luke 13:10-17 is one primary New Testament biblical foundation. Luke 13:10-13 reads as follows:

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, Woman, you are set free from your ailment. When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.

⁷⁰Drorah O'Donnell Setel, *Women's Bible Commentary With Apocrypha*, Expanded Edition, Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, eds. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 19992), 87.

In reading the scripture, it can be assumed that the woman was at the synagogue to hear a Word from the Lord. Elizabeth Cady Stanton suggests that the woman did not go to the synagogue to get healed but was at the synagogue to worship.⁷¹ However, the writer believes that the woman was expecting to be delivered from the spirit that had her bound for eighteen years as she realized that only Jesus could heal her from the stronghold. The writer does not believe that this represents the first time that she was in Jesus' presence as she walked toward him without hesitation when he called her forward. The woman immediately praised God when she was liberated from the demonic spirit. She did not seem to notice or to be bothered by the crowd surrounding her and Jesus. Instead, she was focused on the delivering power of Jesus. This suggests that she was authentic, passionate, and unapologetic in her praise.

The writer believes that Jesus was intentional in teaching at the synagogue on that particular day. She believes that that he knew that the woman, who had been crippled with a spirit for eighteen years, would be present. She also believes that the woman was always to be the subject of Jesus' lesson on that particular day. This suggests that Jesus will even use women to make a theological point.

In his teaching, Jesus informed the Pharisees of the woman's identity. Jesus recognized the woman as an heir to God's covenant with Abraham in spite of her *womaness* and physical deformity. The writer defines womaness as a woman's womanhood or femininity. Through his healing of the woman on the Sabbath, Jesus taught the church leaders and others that healing was to occur anytime a descendant of Abraham was in need and that their practices on the Sabbath were of less importance than his healing. For example, in Luke 13:16, Jesus said:

⁷¹Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible* (Boston, MA: IndyPublish.com, 2011), 317.

And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day.

Jesus' lesson and the woman's immediate praise of God following her deliverance resulted in the crowd of people praising and worshipping Jesus. This is yet one biblical story in which Jesus utilizes a woman's courage and obedience to lead others in praising or worshipping him.

In understanding the woman who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years, one must look beyond her testimony for her story. It is believed that the woman was an able-bodied citizen eighteen years ago. It is also assumed that the woman's emotional distress, unresolved issues, and spiritual conflict exacerbated her physical ailment.⁷² This is evidenced by Luke 13:16, which states that Satan had kept the woman bound for eighteen years. Given her poor posture, the writer perceives that the woman was demoralized and had a low self-esteem and/or low self-confidence.

Satan was the cause of the woman's negative disposition. However, the text does not specifically state how Satan became a stronghold in her life. Thus, the writer believes that the woman had been oppressed by her family, community, synagogue, or society and had begun to believe the lies of the enemy. Moreover, the writer perceives that the woman was bent down because the demonic spirit consumed her mind, heart, soul, spirit, and body.

In spite of her condition, there was something within the woman that wanted to be delivered from the spirit; that wanted to stand upright; that wanted to walk with high self confidence, high self-esteem, and joy, and that wanted to live to her potential. This

⁷²Darrell L. Rock, *The Luke NIV Application Commentary*, Verlyn D. Verbrugge (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 373.

something that was within the woman led her to Jesus. This something within the woman may have been her inner drive or faith. Once she saw Jesus, the woman was no longer a victim to her circumstances. The closer that she got to Jesus, the more her faith in him grew. Thus, the writer believes that the interaction between the woman's faith and Jesus' compassion healed the woman.

According to the Harper Collins Bible Dictionary, the spirit or breath comes from God, who may withdraw breath or spirit at anytime and cause death.⁷³ Thus, the spirit is life within a person. Since the woman who had been crippled was still yet alive, God had not withdrawn breath from her. Thus, that something within the woman that kept her for the eighteen years of her disability was the Spirit of God. Therefore, the woman was restored to health and wholeness as soon as the demonic spirit was removed from her because the Spirit of God had been working within her.

Luke 13:10-17 underscores the fact that black women are demoralized, oppressed, and handicapped by external forces. Furthermore, it demonstrates that black women's emotional distress, low self-esteem, low self-confidence, shyness, and unfulfilled needs and desires are a bi-product of the racist, sexist, and classist society for which they reside. The writer relates well to the woman with the bent down back as she has been shy for the majority of her life, has been demoralized and oppressed, has quieted her passion, has been unfulfilled, and has vacillated between having minimal confidence to moderate to high confidence in various aspects of her life. Likewise, the writer perceives that the women of Harris Memorial CME Church have been unfulfilled and oppressed and have experienced emotional distress, low self-esteem, and low self-confidence. She believes

⁷³*The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary*. 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Harper One, 2011), s.v. *spirit*.

that the women of Harris Memorial CME Church do not consistently praise God freely in the presence of others given the conservative nature of the worship atmosphere at the church, their limited exposure to unrestrained praise, and their history of oppression within and external to the Church.

Luke 13:10-17 is a primary New Testament biblical foundation because the woman, who was previously bent over, showed women how to praise God authentically and unapologetically in that she praised God in the presence of Jesus' opposition. Overall, this scripture reveals that Jesus will simultaneously liberate the women of Harris Memorial CME Church from all that is stunting their growth and preventing them from praising God freely and empower them to praise God authentically and unapologetically with just one touch.

Passionate Worship

Luke 7:36-50 is a second primary New Testament biblical foundation. Below is Luke 7:37-38.

And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment.

The woman with the alabaster jar somehow heard that Jesus was going to be present at the dinner at the Pharisee's house. Typically, "outsiders" attended public dinners and sat by the wall and waited for table scraps.⁷⁴ However, this woman did not attend the event for food. Her sole purpose of attending the feast was to have an

⁷⁴T. C. Butler, *Luke: Holman New Testament Commentary* Vol. 3, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 110.

encounter with Jesus. Her worship of Jesus was passionate in that she humbled herself unto him, had a soul pour experience, and cleansed and anointed his feet. (Please see chapter two for a more detailed description of passionate worship as it relates to Luke 7:36-50.) The woman's worship of Jesus was authentic in that she did not come to the Pharisee's home with false pretenses. Her worship was unapologetic in that she was unconcerned about others' perceptions of her or her manner of worshipping Jesus.

Though Luke identifies the woman with the alabaster jar as a sinner, the main point of this scripture is the woman's expressed love for Jesus. The writer and the women of Harris Memorial CME Church learn from this scripture that Jesus sees women and others beyond the sins that they have committed and forgives them when they offer themselves unto him. The writer relates to the woman with the alabaster jar because she is a passionate person. She also relates to the woman because she has praised and worshipped Jesus passionately for who he is and for what he has done in her life. Furthermore, she relates to this scripture because she has also cried unto Jesus when she has been in awe of his presence and when she has experienced the sorrow of sin. The women of Harris Memorial CME Church may learn how to worship Jesus passionately, authentically, and unapologetically from the woman with the alabaster jar.

Worship Dialogue

A supporting New Testament biblical foundation is John 4:1-42. Jesus had a religious and politically laden discussion about authentic worship (Jn 4:23-24) with a woman, who was devalued in Samaria given her dual identity as a Samaritan and a woman. (Please see chapter two for a description of authentic worship as it relates to John 4:1-42.) The Samaritan woman's thirst for truth coupled with the divergent views of

worship between Jews and Samaritans provoked her to question Jesus about the proper place of worship (Jn 4:19-20). John 4:19-26 provides evidence that women's understanding of worship is important to Jesus and that women's worship experiences are encouraged by Jesus. Therefore, John 4:1-42 is in direct opposition of Paul's proclamation that women should be silent in the churches (1 Cor 14:33b).

Prior to reviewing aspects of John 4:1-42, it is important to provide a historical perspective of the text. According to Vernon Lyons, approximately 700 years before Jesus Christ, King Sargon of Assyria placed Israelites in captivity. Assyrians intermarried and procreated with the remaining Israelites and thus created a new people known as Samaritans. Since the Jewish faith was compromised by the Samaritans, the Samaritans were segregated from the pure Israelites and Jews. The Samaritans caused havoc because they were not permitted to help rebuild the temple that was previously destroyed. Jews and Samaritans had different ideas in regards to worship. Jews thought that Jerusalem and the temples were holy; whereas the Samaritans thought that Mt. Gerizim was holy.⁷⁵

The woman at the well was astonished by Jesus' presence at Jacob's well as Jewish men and Jewish rabbis did not typically converse with Samaritan women in public at that time (Jn 4:9). She was also shocked that Jesus wanted to interact with her and drink of her water (Jn 4:9).

John 4:13-18 suggests that worshippers should come to Jesus as they are, yet leave transformed. John 4:13-18 reads as follows:

Jesus said to her, Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a

⁷⁵Vernon C. Lyons, *The Revivals In The Bible* (Enumclaw, WA: Pleasant Word, 2009), 122, 125-126.

spring of water gushing up to eternal life. The woman said to him, Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water. Jesus said to her, Go, call your husband, and come back. The woman answered him, I have no husband. Jesus said to her, You are right in saying, I have no husband; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!

Though female and male preachers across church houses often scrutinize the woman at the well for her relationship history, the purpose of this scripture is to demonstrate the Samaritan woman's thirst for Jesus and eternal life (Jn 4:15) and Jesus' knowledge of her and desire to share salvation with her (Jn 4:16-19,14).

The writer and the women of Harris Memorial CME Church relate to John 4:1-42 given their dual identities as Black Americans and women. The writer also relates to the woman at the well given her private worship experiences with the Holy Trinity and her desire to gain more knowledge and wisdom regarding theology. The woman at the well empowers women to worship God in spirit and truth (Jn 4:23) and to testify about the awesomeness of Jesus (Jn 4:29, 39).

Confident/Unapologetic Worship

Luke 8:42b-48 is a secondary New Testament biblical foundation. Luke 8:42b-48 reads as follows:

As he went, the crowds pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years; and though she had spent all she had on physicians, no one could cure her. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his clothes, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. Then Jesus asked, Who touched me? When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and press in on you." But Jesus said, Someone touched me; for I noticed that power had gone out from me. When the woman saw that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before him, she declared in the

presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. He said to her, Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.

Jesus was on his way to Jairus' home to save Jairus' 12-year-old daughter from death when the encounter occurred between him and the woman typically known as the woman with issues of blood (Lk 8:41-42). The woman was considered impure due to laws of impurity (Lev 15:25-30). Thus, her condition prevented her from going to church or from participating in cultic activities. She was isolated from others due to the misperception that she would infect anyone that she touched or that she would contaminate items that she touched. Although it was rare for women to walk around unaccompanied during these times, she sought Jesus because she was desperate for a cure (Lk 8:43). Her desperation and faith enabled her to boldly touch the hem of Jesus' garment in spite of potential consequences.⁷⁶

The woman's healing occurred out of her initiative. The moment that she touched the hem of Jesus' garment, she stopped bleeding. When Jesus called her daughter, he acknowledged her position within his family.⁷⁷ This scripture demonstrates that Jesus wants to make it known that he liberates women from oppression and wants liberated women to be acknowledged by their new identities (Lk 8:45-46). Additionally, this scripture informs women that when they feel weak or are going through vicious cycles, Jesus is their power source and will deliver them from all of their adversities (Lk 8:46).

The writer conceptualizes the woman typically known as the woman with issues of blood as being a *model of confident worship* or a *model of unapologetic worship*. The

⁷⁶Mary Ann Tolbert, *Women's Bible Commentary With Apocrypha*, Expanded Edition, Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, eds. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 355.

⁷⁷Ibid.

terms *confident worship* and *unapologetic worship* are synonymous since persons who are confident in who they are and in what they do are typically unapologetic about what they are convicted about. The writer defines confident worship (and unapologetic worship) as worship in which persons faithfully (Lk 8:48) seek Jesus (Lk 8:42b-44) expect to be transformed or delivered as a result of being in Jesus' presence (Lk 8:44), worship Jesus with humility and awe, and testify about the goodness of Jesus before others (Lk 8:47). Luke 8:47-48 reads as follows:

When the woman saw that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before him, she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. He said to her, Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.

The writer argues that this woman demonstrates authentic, passionate, and unapologetic worship in that she trembled and fell down before Jesus (Lk 8:47) and gave a testimony about her healing in the presence of others (Lk 8:47).

The writer relates to the woman typically known as the woman with issues of blood because she was hypersensitive in the past. The writer believes that the women of Harris Memorial CME Church have experienced emotional hurt and had some unhealthy cycles or pervasive problems in their lives. Luke 8:42b-48 empowers the women of Harris Memorial CME Church to seek Jesus in order to break unhealthy cycles in their lives and to worship Jesus and other aspects of the Holy Trinity authentically and passionately. Likewise, this scripture gives the women of Harris Memorial CME Church courage to worship Jesus unapologetically in the presence of others.

Liberation Theologies

In Luke 4:18–19, Jesus proclaimed that he is liberator to the oppressed.

Specifically, Jesus stated,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he [God] has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He [God] has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

A review of pertinent scriptures (Lk 13:10-17; Jn 4:1-40; Lk 7:36-50; Lk 8:42b-48) demonstrates that Jesus served as liberator to oppressed biblical women. Likewise, Jesus is and always has been the source of liberation for black women and all others who are oppressed. Jesus serves as liberator to black women through his ministry with women and advocacy of women in the biblical days, his conquering of evil and sin through his resurrection, his intercessions, and his felt presence in the twenty first century.

The writer sought to liberate the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church to praise and worship authentically, passionately, and unapologetically. Thus, liberation is reviewed briefly. Emilie Townes defined liberation as “the process of struggle with ourselves and with each other that begets the transformation of all of us to our full humanity.”⁷⁸ This definition of liberation suggests that the oppressed have to be freed from internalized and externalized oppression in order to be liberated. Moreover, this definition suggests that oppression is a stronghold that prevents persons from being who God ordained them to be.

⁷⁸Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Theological Ethics*, Eds. Katie Geneva Cannon, Emilie M. Townes, and Angela D. Sims. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 41.

The women of Harris Memorial CME Church will be able to praise and worship authentically, passionately, and unapologetically once they give themselves permission to praise and worship in their own way in the midst of a conservative worship environment. This is consistent with James Cone's assertion that "the grounding of Christian ethics in the oppressed community means that the oppressor cannot decide what Christian behavior is."⁷⁹ Thus, the worship leaders and congregants of Harris Memorial CME Church cannot determine how the women's praise and worship should look or sound.

Liberation is an enduring journey towards freedom that is never completely accomplished.⁸⁰ Therefore, oppressed persons should be persistent in seeking freedom. Oppressed Christians should call on God for liberation (1 Sm 1:9-11) or seek Jesus for deliverance (Lk 8:42b-48) and trust that God will ultimately liberate them (Lk 13:10-13). Specifically, the women of Harris Memorial CME Church should consistently challenge themselves to praise and worship God in their own way.

Each liberation theology has its own point of reference and is related to the struggle of the people for which it was developed⁸¹ because every demoralized group has the right to voice their oppression and to uncover ways to be liberated from oppression.⁸² At its core, all liberation theologies focus on freeing humanity from evil.⁸³ However,

⁷⁹James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 190-191.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 41.

⁸¹Justo L. Gonzalez & Catherine G. Gonzalez, *The Liberating Pulpit* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 22-23.

⁸²Renita J. Weems, *Womanist Theological Ethics*, eds. Katie Geneva Cannon, Emilie M. Townes, and Angela D. Sims, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 55.

⁸³Justo L. Gonzalez & Catherine G. Gonzalez, *The Liberating Pulpit* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 22-23.

theologies that purport to represent all of the oppressed are oppressive because they do not speak to all people's realities of oppression.⁸⁴

Below is a brief description of black liberation theology, feminist theology, black feminist theology, and womanist theology. According to James Cone, black theology is a "theology of and for black people."⁸⁵ Black liberation theology focuses on black people's history of struggle,⁸⁶ stories of oppression and freedom from the time of slavery,⁸⁷ and the racism⁸⁸ that they have endured. James Cone asserts that black persons view Jesus as the source of their liberation and salvation.⁸⁹ Therefore, thought, practice, worship, and theology are interrelated in black liberation theology.⁹⁰ Though black women may relate to the above, their needs are not fully represented in black liberation theology as liberation from sexism is not a major tenet of black liberation theology.

According to Anne Clifford, feminism was developed to "end oppression, discrimination, and violence directed to women and to acquire full equality and human dignity for every woman."⁹¹ In order to make this definition ring true, feminists have made their approach to ending oppression in women broader and have adopted various

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 16.

⁸⁶Ibid., 141.

⁸⁷Ibid., 49.

⁸⁸Ibid., 143.

⁸⁹Ibid., 32.

⁹⁰Ibid., 49.

⁹¹Anne M. Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 13.

women's liberation theologies, such as womanist theology under the umbrella of feminist theology.

According to black feminist, bell hooks, feminism began with a fight against male domination and thus was initially "anti-male." However, feminists softened their anti-male campaign once they discovered that women suffer from internalized sexism. bell hooks asserted that feminists focused on classism amongst women during the early stages of contemporary feminism prior to discussions on racism.⁹² However, bell hooks argued that white feminists were in denial about the isms that women endure beyond sexism.⁹³ Though black women endure sexism, the sexism that they endure is not captured by traditional feminist theology nor is the classism and racism that they encounter. Thus, feminist theology does not fully represent black women's unique needs for liberation from oppression.

According to Combahee River Collective, black feminists emerged in the 1960s during the second wave of the American women's movement. However, the National Black Feminist Organization was developed in 1973. Combahee River Collective postulated that black feminists believe that black women need to be liberated from oppression; that black feminists promote self-love, love amongst black women, and love amongst the black community; that black feminist's primarily focus on the liberation of black women; that black feminists believe that sexual politics is just as important as racism, sexism, and classism in the lives of black women; and that black feminists view

⁹²bell hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000), 2-3.

⁹³Ibid., 55.

black women as partners with black men in the struggle against racism, but endure sexism from black men.⁹⁴

Although black feminist theology may meet the needs of black women, some black women identify as black feminists; whereas others identify as womanists. According to Jacquelyn Grant, some perceive the term black feminism to be contradictory as white feminists are unsupportive in uplifting black women.⁹⁵ Therefore, some black women prefer to identify as womanists than as black feminists. The term womanist is special because it captures black women's full identity and it is a distinct term from traditional white feminism. The writer identified as a black feminist in the field of clinical psychology. However, she currently identifies as a womanist given her recent exposure to womanist theology and theory.

Traci West, a black feminist, applauds womanist theology. However, she perceives that her focus on the wholeness of black women is in contradiction to womanists' focus on the wholeness of the black community. Likewise, she perceives that her focus on the sexual harassment of black women by black clergy would be unacceptable by womanists. Additionally, she believes that womanists should advocate more for lesbians.⁹⁶

⁹⁴Combahee River Collective, *A Black Feminist Statement in Oppression, Privilege, & Resistance: Theoretical, Perspectives On Racism, Sexism, And Heterosexism*, Lisa Heldke & Peg O'Connor eds. (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 2004), 645-647.

⁹⁵Jacquelyn Grant, *White Women's Christ And Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology And Womanist Response* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), 201.

⁹⁶Traci C. West, *Is a Womanist a Black Feminist? Marking the Distinctions and Defying Them: A Black Feminist Response*, ed. Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006), 294.

Only black women who identify themselves as womanists and who intentionally work to end oppression are womanists.⁹⁷ A womanist identity "necessitates an existential moral commitment to advancing life, freedom, and dignity for all people..." Thus, womanists consistently fight against all forms of oppression.⁹⁸

According to Kelly Brown Douglas, "everyday women who sit in the pews of black churches on Sunday morning...supply womanist religious scholars with the sustenance of our work. They are the resources of our knowledge about God and the meaning of God for black women and men in struggle."⁹⁹ This underscores the necessity of black women in defining their own liberation and ways to seek freedom from daily oppression.

Womanist theology examines and attends to ways in which the black community and commonly respected black institutions, such as the Black Church, promote oppression against black women.¹⁰⁰ Likewise, womanists name the ills of society, the black community, and the Black Church that has resulted in black women's fragmentation.¹⁰¹ Womanist theology also applauds aspects of the black culture that positively impact black women and the black community.¹⁰²

⁹⁷Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Theological Ethics*, eds. Katie Geneva Cannon, Emilie M. Townes, and Angela D. Sims. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 36.

⁹⁸Kelly Brown Douglas, *Twenty Years A Womanist: An Affirming Challenge in Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society*. ed. Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006), 151.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁰⁰Kelly Brown Douglas, *The Black Christ* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 99.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, 106.

Black Women's Oppression Within The Black Church

The writer has heard black women talk about their experiences with oppression at their jobs, within their families, romantic relationships, and in the larger society.

However, she has rarely heard black women discuss the oppression that they have endured in the Black Church. This is likely because they have minimal insight into the oppression that they have endured or they believe that it is improper to discuss oppression experienced at church as they are not the only group in the church that endures oppression and church is a sacred institution. bell hooks explained this phenomenon in saying that "the absence of extreme restrictions leads many women to ignore the areas in which they are exploited or discriminated against; it may even lead them to imagine that no women are oppressed."¹⁰³

The writer has unfortunately endured sexism in the form of fallacious gossip and sexual harassment and ageism within the Black Church. Additionally, the writer has collectively endured oppression with other black women when she has heard sexist exegesis of scripture and sexist sermons from the pulpit and observed sexist practices by clergy and church leaders. This is consistent with Cheryl Townsend Gilkes' statement that preaching is the most "masculine" aspect of the worship experience in the Black Church.¹⁰⁴

The oppression that black women have endured within the Black Church has resulted in them concealing their passion and in them feeling demoralized.¹⁰⁵ Thus, black

¹⁰³bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin To Center*, Second Edition (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000), 5.

¹⁰⁴Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, *If It Wasn't For The Women* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 129.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 191.

women need to be encouraged to voice their experiences with oppression internal and external to the Black Church, to define themselves, and to embrace themselves and their passion. Thus, the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church were encouraged to voice their opinions on praise and worship experiences at Harris Memorial CME Church and were empowered to embrace themselves.

Praise Theology

The Harper Collins Dictionary defines praise as the act of "glorifying the Lord."¹⁰⁶ Praise involves Christians acknowledging God for who God is and for what God does (1 Chr 16:8). There are various ways to praise God. For example, Christians may praise God through reading scripture, preaching, praying, and singing.¹⁰⁷

There are countless benefits of praising God. For example, praise ushers in the presence of God and thus may transform into worship since God dwells in praise (Ps 22:3). Christians learn more about God and more about themselves during praise experiences because they are focused on God and on what God has done in their lives.¹⁰⁸ Likewise, praising God makes Christians more appreciative of God and increases their faith in God.¹⁰⁹ Praise prompts mental shifts in Christians because they think less about their adversities and more about their blessings when they consistently praise God. Praise

¹⁰⁶The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary. 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Harper One, 2011), s.v. *praise*.

¹⁰⁷David F. Ford, and Daniel W. Hardy, *Living in Praise: Worshipping and Knowing God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005), 19.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 12-13.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 13.

also increases God's intervention in Christians' lives.¹¹⁰ Praise experiences have the potential of transforming the divided women of Harris Memorial CME Church into a cohesive and whole group of women. This is because corporate praise of God strengthens relationships amongst a community of Christians.¹¹¹

Praise guides Christians in sharing their experiences of God with others.¹¹² Thus, praise and testimonies are related constructs. Testimonies transform *praisers*, *testifiers*, and *listeners* into a community of believers. The art of testifying is cathartic, inspirational, and empowering. Testimonies prompt social and Christian change¹¹³ and increases persons' convictions in Jesus Christ and the Christian lifestyle. According to Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, black women often lead testimony services in the Black Church and preachers occasionally refer to black women's testimonies in their sermons.¹¹⁴

Worship Theology

Worship is commanded by God (Ex 23:25). Therefore, worship encounters with the Holy Trinity are necessary for all who claim to be Christians. Owen Thomas and Ellen Wondra defined worship as “the conscious turning of the attention toward God in an attitude of praise and thanksgiving.”¹¹⁵ When the writer focuses solely on the Holy

¹¹⁰Michael Youseff, *Empowered By Praise* (Colorado Springs, CO: Water Brook Press, 2002), 11-18.

¹¹¹Ford and Hardy, *Living in Praise...* 19.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 107.

¹¹³Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, *If It Wasn't For The Black Women* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 137.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 131.

¹¹⁵Owen C Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, Third Edition (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 291.

Trinity and her interaction with the Holy Trinity, she transcends conservative worship atmospheres to a spiritual plane through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The writer is confident that the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church may also transform the worship environment at Harris Memorial CME Church once they are liberated and empowered to worship in their own way.

Worship occurs when Christians make God a priority in their daily lives.

According to Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, the crux of worship is for worshippers to "seek to know and love God" in their own way. Worship experiences are impacted by Christians' abilities to focus on God and to worship God with their whole beings.¹¹⁶

Owen Thomas and Ellen Wondra argued that the purpose of worship "is to recall the salvation given to us by God in Christ and to praise and thank God for this gift."¹¹⁷ Although God should be worshipped for God's unmerited gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, the Christian God is an active God. Thus, the writer argues that Christians should also worship God for who God is to them at present.

Though worship should not be limited to Sunday morning, corporate worship experiences are necessary for the Body of Christ. Worship increases Christians understanding of God, deepens their relationship with God,¹¹⁸ and creates a sense of

¹¹⁶Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Discipline Handbook* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2005), 45.

¹¹⁷Owen C Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, Third Edition (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 299.

¹¹⁸Clayton J. Schmidt, *Worship That Changes Lives: Multidisciplinary and Congregational Perspectives on Spiritual Transformation*, Alexis D. Abernathy ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 26.

community amongst worshippers.¹¹⁹ Worship with the triune God is liberating, empowering, and transforming. God reveals God's self to God's people during worship experiences and heals and delivers them from all that ails their hearts, souls, spirits, minds, and bodies when they give themselves over to God. God also conforms broken vessels and sinful persons into the whole and righteous persons that God predestined them to be.

Praise And Worship Theology Within The Black Church

The Black Church is a historic church founded on black slaves' passion for praising and worshipping a God, who they believed would free them from slavery. Today, the Black Church is a place where Black Americans praise and worship a Savior, who saves them from sin and evil. The Black Church serves as a sacred institution in which Black Americans get a break from the oppression that they endure in the American society and are liberated and empowered to continue on in the Christian journey.

Melva Wilson Costen expresses a similar sentiment below:

Worship within the black church allows the worshipper to transcend social structures imposed by the dominant culture. Under the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, freedom is granted and new meaning is given to life. One's dignity and worth are affirmed, a positive self-image can be developed and maintained, and healing can take place.¹²⁰

According to Anthony Pinn, corporate worship "serves as a basic measure of involvement in the life of the church and the basic source of spiritual renewal and encouragement for members of the black church." This reigns true at Harris Memorial

¹¹⁹Teresa L. Fry-Brown, *Delivering the Sermon: Elements of Preaching*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2008.

¹²⁰Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship*, updated ed. (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2007), 10.

CME Church, where corporate worship experiences represents the greatest opportunity to reach and minister to souls.

According to Melva Wilson Costen, corporate worship experiences in the Black Church are interactive and include praying, preaching, singing, and fellowship [and *womanship*] and serves to counteract the oppression that is experienced by Black Americans in the American society.¹²¹ Testimonies are also an important aspect of corporate worship within the Black Church.¹²² The writer adds the term *womanship* to Melva Wilson Costen's aforementioned statement and defines *womanship* as the total woman (heart, soul, spirit, mind, and body) involved in worship. *Womanship* involves a woman worshipping authentically, passionately, and unapologetically with her gender fully present. In this respect, a woman is free to worship with all of her womaness and femininity and does not have to be concerned about others' perceptions of her worship. *Womanship* also includes women communing together for the purpose of learning about the Holy Trinity, empowering one another, or socializing with one another.

Sermons in the Black Church have focused on salvation, oppression, and politics since slavery given black Christians' history and current reality of oppression.¹²³ The Black Church is well known for its call and response, which typically occurs during the spoken word in the Black Church. The call and response may be verbal or nonverbal. Congregants tend to wave their hands, clap, stand up, cry, run, shake their heads, rock back and forth, moan, hum, and say, "Amen" or "Halleluiaah," or similar euphemisms.

¹²¹Ibid., 66-67.

¹²²Pinn, Anthony, B. *The Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 46.

¹²³Ibid.

Congregants may also look intently at the preacher and say amen or clap occasionally during call and response. Shouting or "getting happy" during prayers, singing, and sermon delivery is also a common response to the Holy Spirit in the Black Church.¹²⁴

CME Church Theology

The CME Church's theology is to love God's children, to save lost souls, to meet the needs of the communities where the CME Church is present, and to participate in justice. The CME Church believes that "each person is of infinite worth and a child of God."¹²⁵ However, there are preachers within the CME denomination that proclaim that women are subservient to men. The CME discipline reads, "to exploit, to dehumanize any person through pride or arrogance is thoroughly unbiblical and unchristian." This suggests to the writer that the oppression of women within the Black Church is viewed as sinful and evil to the CME Church.

The CME Church defines worship as a "response to God's faithfulness."¹²⁶ According to the CME Discipline, "the purpose of worship is to prepare the participants for their divinely ordained redemptive witness in every place and circumstance."¹²⁷ This suggests to the writer that the CME Church promotes active participation of worshippers

¹²⁴Maynard-Reid, *Diverse Worship: African American, Caribbean & Hispanic Perspectives* (Madison, WI: IVP Academic, 2000), 103.

¹²⁵*The Book of Discipline of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church* Rev. ed. (Memphis, TN: The CME Publishing House, 2010), 34-35.

¹²⁶*Book Of Ritual Christian Methodist Episcopal Church*, New and Rev. Bishop Marshall Gilmore, Ed. (Memphis, TN: Department of Publications, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church), 1.

¹²⁷*The Book of Discipline of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church* Rev. ed. (Memphis, TN: The CME Publishing House, 2010), 34-35.

and encourages worshippers to testify and witness to the awesomeness of God during corporate worship experiences.

As recorded in the CME Book of Ritual, "response takes place because God acted in ways that make us know he [God] is worthy to be praised." Moreover, the CME ritual states, "the Christ-Event prompts praise." The Christ-Event is defined as the "passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus as well as the incarnation, crucifixion, and ascension of Jesus Christ." This suggests that the CME denomination encourages congregants to respond to the presence and awesomeness of God during cooperative worship experiences.¹²⁸

The CME Church believes that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are present during corporate worship experiences. Moreover, the Church asserts that "the pattern of worship, then, is a celebration of the worthy-ness of God who is the Living Presence... Without the recognition of God's presence, the service degenerates into the glorification of human beings and into entertainment and showmanship."¹²⁹ This suggests to the writer that the CME Church wants its members to praise and worship the Holy Trinity authentically and passionately.

The CME Book of Ritual provides six steps of worship. The six steps of worship include having a "vision of God; adoration and praise; confession of sin; the gift of pardon" from sin; "the challenge of God to the worshippers" to create disciples of Jesus

¹²⁸Book Of Ritual Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, New and Rev. Bishop Marshall Gilmore, Ed. (Memphis, TN: Department of Publications, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church), 1.

¹²⁹Ibid., 2-3.

Christ; and the need for worshippers to make a "decision" to be transformed as a result of worship experiences or to remain the same as they were prior to worship encounters.¹³⁰

Authentic, Passionate, And Unapologetic Praise

Praise is a socially constructed concept in that Christians are to praise God corporately and individually and praise is a learned behavior that is formed by watching others praise God in the midst of corporate praise and worship experiences.¹³¹ Thus, the women of Harris Memorial CME Church praise God in a reserved manner because they have been exposed to conservative praise at Harris Memorial CME Church. The good news is that Christians may learn how to praise God authentically, passionately, and unapologetically by praising God privately. This is because individual praise provides Christians the opportunity to praise God in their own way without scrutiny and affords them the opportunity to focus on God during their praise experiences.¹³²

Praise is supposed to be free and unrestricted. However, churches may suggest, imply, or demand that persons quiet their praise to God in order to maintain a conservative or traditional worship environment. Each time this occurs at Harris Memorial CME Church or any other Christian churches, it is oppressive.¹³³ The writer asserts that persons are oppressed whenever they are implicitly or explicitly told that they must conform to a norm.

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹Ford and Hardy, *Living in Praise...*, 13.

¹³²Ibid., 28.

¹³³Ibid., 105.

Some Christians are able to ignore criticisms about their manner of praising God and praise God in their own way anyhow; while others quiet their praise or praise God while looking for approval or expecting criticism from the Pharisees of the church. Those who are able to praise God authentically, passionately, and unapologetically anyhow are mature in their walk with Jesus and thus are not moved by others' opinions of them.¹³⁴ Those who are less spiritually mature or less confident in their manner of praising God need to be liberated and empowered to praise God in their own way and nurtured in their Christian walk.

Stoicism is a major problem in traditional denominations. Stoicism dictates that congregations must behave in such a way to maintain the facade that a church or denomination is polished and demure. While stoicism may impress like-minded Christians, stoicism does not impress God. Daniel Hardy and David Ford discussed the negative impact that stoicism has on praise experiences and on churches. They suggested that stoicism makes it difficult for Christians to praise God in their own way, prevents congregations and persons from transforming, steals persons' joy and excitement, and prevents needed change in a Body of Christ. Moreover, they suggested that stoic churches view change and different approaches to church and praise as a "disorder."¹³⁵

In order to combat any form of oppression, one must be liberated. Thus, in order to combat the spirits of stoicism and self-consciousness, one must be liberated to praise God without restraint. The writer defines liberated praise as free, authentic, and life-changing praise. David Ford and Daniel Hardy define liberal praise as passionate praise

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Ibid., 178.

that is committed to truth, justice, and personal integrity, that resolves conflict, guides communities of faith, and exposes oppressive doctrines.¹³⁶

Authentic, Passionate, And Unapologetic Worship

According to the Harper Collins Bible Dictionary, “genuine worship is not merely for show (Matt. 6:1-18), it involves surrender of the self to God in faithful obedience (Rom 12:1).”¹³⁷ Authentic worship will only occur when persons trust that they will be received and accepted by the Church if they bring their authentic selves to corporate worship experiences. Thus, it is essential that the Church meet people where they are as Jesus meet both the saved and unsaved where they are (John 4).

It is important that the women of Harris Memorial CME Church and all others who gather for worship are comfortable with sharing their real selves with God and congregants during worship experiences. Persons are liberated, healed, and transformed when they can worship authentically, passionately, and unapologetically.

Howard Thurman highlighted the need for persons to be authentic and unapologetic during worship encounters when he stated, “in authentic religious experience the individual is [her or] himself totally involved. This involvement includes the context of meanings, experiences, and values by which the persona is defined.”¹³⁸

It is important that the Church facilitates unique praise and worship experiences that meet the needs of the gathered community of worshippers. Worship encounters and

¹³⁶Ibid., 181.

¹³⁷*The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary*. 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Harper One, 2011), s.v. *Worship In The New Testament*.

¹³⁸Howard Thurman, *The Creative Encounter: An Interpretation of Religion and the Social Witness* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1954), 22-23.

experiences are shaped by worshippers' lived experiences and diversity variables, such as race, gender, and class. Pedrito Maynard-Reid adamantly stated, "if worship does not have its grounding in people's lives and cultural experiences, it will remain foreign, imposed, and irrelevant."¹³⁹ Corporate worship experiences that are irrelevant to people's spiritual, emotional, and mental needs are inauthentic. Thus, black women and all other Christians need to be exposed to worship experiences that meet their unique praise and worship needs. When this occurs, black women and others will feel more confident in praising and worshipping God authentically, passionately, and unapologetically.

¹³⁹Maynard-Reid, *Diverse Worship: African American...*, 19.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Towards The Doctor Of Ministry Project

The writer initially joined the *Developing the Theory, Practices and Power of Spiritual Nurture through Prayer and Blessing* focus group with mentor, Dr. Jacqueline Nowak and her advisor, Donald Rogers, in January of 2010. She joined the focus group because she wanted to merge the fields of clinical psychology and ministry together. However, she joined the *Congregational Development And Forming New Faith Communities In The 21st Century, Including A Womanist/Feminist Theological Perspective* focus group with mentors, Dr. Angela D. Washington and Dr. Donnell J. Moore after she took a semester off from the program. She joined the focus group because it enabled her to focus on her passion for empowering black women.

The writer was initially perplexed in terms of the context that she would utilize for her doctor of ministry project. She contemplated utilizing a psychological practice, female Doctor of Ministry students at UTS, Butler Street CME Church in Atlanta, Georgia and Harris Memorial CME Church in Dayton, Ohio. The writer decided to do her doctor of ministry project at a church once she accepted her identity as a preacher and future pastor.

The writer initially chose to do her doctor of ministry project at Butler Street CME Church. However, she had minimal participation from her context associates and the women of the church. The writer was subsequently led by the Holy Spirit to change her context to Harris Memorial CME Church while attending Harris Memorial CME Church in October of 2011.

The writer observed throughout her years at Harris Memorial CME Church that the congregation was reserved in their corporate worship experiences. She also observed that they had lost their passion for ministry and endured unresolved conflict. The writer chose to focus on the church's praise and worship experiences because praise and worship serve as the foundation to church ministry and cohesion.

The writer chose to specifically focus on the women of Harris Memorial CME Church due to her passion in liberating and empowering black women, her desire to learn about womanist theology, and her eagerness to enrich the women's praise and worship experiences. The writer was also interested in developing and implementing a ministry for the women since Harris Memorial CME Church does not have a women's ministry.

Writer's Role

The writer was the principal investigator and was actively engaged in the ministry project. She designed and implemented the ministry project and measures and analyzed the results. She developed the Soul Pour Journal, facilitated one focus group, led the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop, gave a testimony during the workshop, shared a poem entitled, *Our Testimony*, that she wrote based on the participants' collective

testimonies, preached and led the altar call at three of the womanist worship experiences, incorporated poetry that she and others wrote in her sermons, wrote two prayers in the Soul Pour Prayer Book, and preached a sermon entitled, *Have You Lost Your Passion For Jesus*, during a corporate worship experience at Harris Memorial CME Church. The writer wrote in the Soul Pour Journal for two days and did a complete fast for the five days leading up to the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop. She resumed fasting for four days after the workshop during the three womanist worship experiences.

Context Associates' Roles

The context associates assisted in the development and implementation of the current doctor of ministry project. Two of the context associates promoted the ministry project, administered the relevant paperwork, the Soul Pour Journal, and the Soul Pour Prayer Book, facilitated two focus groups, collected data, and consulted with the writer regarding the development and implementation of the Soul Pour Journal, the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop, and the womanist worship experiences. Four of the context associates assisted the writer in decorating and preparing for the Empowered Women of Praise Workshop. One of the context associates decorated the dining area in the church on the last day of the womanist worship experiences. Another context associate selected the songs based on the writer's sermon topics and scriptural references and sang solos during the praise and worship period. One context associate did a praise dance during the Liberating Our Spirit Womanist Worship Experience.

Context

The writer believes that she was destined to do her doctor of ministry project at Harris Memorial CME Church because a part of her soul resides at the church. Likewise, she perceived that Harris Memorial CME Church was an appropriate context since it served as a foundation to her understanding of God, religion, and ministry.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the current doctor of ministry project is that if the women of Harris Memorial CME Church are exposed to authentic, passionate, and unapologetic womanist worship experiences, they will be liberated and empowered to praise and worship in their own way and liberated and empowered overall. The writer believes that the women have quieted their praise and worship due to their history of oppression and scrutiny in society, exposure to conservative worship experiences, and membership at a church with ongoing conflict and judgment. The current exploratory hypothesis will test whether or not educating the women of Harris Memorial CME Church about praise and worship and exposing them to womanist worship experiences will enable them to praise and worship authentically, passionately, and unapologetically. The writer's method of proving or disproving the hypothesis was to provide the women of Harris Memorial CME Church with educational and experiential opportunities with praise and worship and womanist worship experiences.

Participants

The writer sought female participants from Harris Memorial CME Church for the current doctor of ministry project. She marketed the project through printed flyers that were inserted into the church's weekly worship bulletins. Announcements were also given by the writer's context associates during corporate worship experiences. The participants signed consent forms and completed demographic forms prior to participating in the current ministry project. (Please See Appendix A for the consent form and Appendix B for the demographic forms.) One participant refused to complete the demographic form. Participants, who only attended womanist worship experiences did not complete a formal consent form. Instead, they gave their consent to participate in the ministry project by completing and submitting a feedback measure following the womanist worship experiences.

Primary Research Demographics

Twenty five participants turned in a consent form to participate in the ministry project. Twenty participants attended the Empowered Women of Praise Workshop. Twenty four participants completed the demographic forms. Eight participants ranged in age from 50 to 65, eight ranged in age from 25 to 34, six ranged in age from 35 to 50, and two were 65 years old and older. The average age of the participants could not be advanced since the age ranges of the participants were given versus the actual ages of the participants.

Eleven participants were former members of other denominations. The denominations that the members had previously been affiliated with are the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, the Baptist denomination, the Church of God In Christ (COGIC), the Seven Day Adventist Church, and a Non-Denominational Church.

The remaining participants had been members of the CME Church from one year to approximately 53 years. One participant noted that she had been members of the CME Church for her entire life. An average amount of years that the participants were members of the CME Church cannot be advanced since some of the participants did not give an exact number of years.

The participants had been members of Harris Memorial CME Church from 1 year to 58 years. Three participants reported that they have been a member of the church during their entire lives. One participant identified herself as a "frequent visitor." The average amount of years that the participants had been members of Harris Memorial CME Church cannot be advanced since some of the participants did not provide the exact number of years.

The participants are members on various boards and ministries at Harris Memorial CME Church. More specifically, the participants indicated that they are in the prayer band, the missionary society, the stewardess board, the usher board, the trustee board, the choir, the praise team, the youth and young adults, the praise dancers, and the community LEAD organization. Additionally some of the participants reported that they assist with the Christian Youth Fellowship, serve the community with the food pantry, and attend Sunday School.

The participants reported occupations include: a staffing coordinator, a social worker, a medical records clerk, a general detail cleaner, a person with a government position, a retired customer service representative, a retired factory worker, a nurse, a food production clerk, a retired lab technician, a nurse assistant, a pre-school teacher, a retired teacher, a funding manager, a medical school administrator, a credit specialist, an account executive, a "retired mother" and housewife, and a screen printing specialist. Some of the participants identified themselves as students or as unemployed.

Secondary Research Demographics

Secondary research was conducted to determine whether or not a womanist sermon would impact women and men differently. A hypothesis was not developed for the secondary research as the purpose was to explore whether or not there would be a difference in reaction to the womanist sermon based on gender.

Sixteen female participants completed pre-tests, post-tests, and feedback measures prior to and following a sermon during a corporate worship experience at Harris Memorial CME Church. Four female participants ranged in age from 18 to 34 years old, two were 35 to 49 years old, six were 50 to 65 years old, and three were 66 to 75 years old. One female participant did not provide her age.

Six male participants completed pre-tests, post-tests, and feedback measures prior to and following a sermon during a corporate worship experience. One male participant ranged in age from 18 to 34 years old, two were 50 to 65 years old, and three were 66 to 75 years old.

Four persons, who did not identify their gender, completed pre-tests, post-tests, and feedback measures prior to and following a sermon during a corporate worship experience. One of the unidentified gendered persons ranged in age from 35 to 49 years old, one was 66 to 75 years old, and two were 50 to 65 years old.

Research Design

Qualitative analyses were conducted in order to study whether exposure to womanist worship experiences would liberate and empower the participants to praise and worship in their own way. The exploratory analyses also examined whether or not exposure to womanist worship experiences would liberate and empower the participants overall. The research design included a pre-test and post-test prior to and following the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop and a focus group on the participants' perceptions regarding praise. Feedback measures regarding the Soul Pour Journal, Soul Pour Prayer Book, and three womanist worship experiences and the Overall Ratings measure were also included in the research design.

Data was collected throughout the research project in order to determine whether or not the interventions resulted in the participants' liberation and empowerment to praise and worship in their own way and to be liberated and empowered overall. A triangulation method approach was utilized to validate the results. Hence, data was analyzed to determine whether or not three or more methods met the hypothesis.

Secondary research included a pre-test and post-test prior to and following a womanist sermon to the congregation of Harris Memorial CME Church and a feedback form following the womanist sermon.

Measurement

The interventions of the primary research were measured through the use of a pre-test and post-test, feedback forms following three womanist worship experiences, the completion of the Soul Pour Journal and the Soul Pour Prayer Book, and an Overall Ratings measure.

Secondary research included a pre-test and a post-test prior to and following a womanist sermon and a feedback measure following a womanist sermon presented to the congregation of Harris Memorial CME Church.

Instrumentation

The three focus groups were facilitated by the writer and two context associates in order to study the participants' perceptions on what prompts and hinders them from praising God. The focus groups also explored the participants' perception about whether or not their identity as black women or members of the CME denomination impacts the way that they praise during corporate worship experiences.

The Yes/No Questionnaire was administered to twenty participants prior to the Empowered Women of Praise Workshop. The primary purpose of the Yes/No Questionnaire was to gain an understanding of what prompts the participants to praise God. The Yes/No Questionnaires also assessed whether or not the participants have felt the presence of the Holy Spirit and whether or not they have felt judged for their style of

praising God or self-conscious when they praise God. The Yes/No Questionnaires also assessed whether or not the participants pray beyond corporate worship experiences.

The pre-test and post-tests prior to and following the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop assessed whether or not the participants learned any new information regarding praise, worship, and testimony during the workshop.

The Soul Pour Feedback measure, Confident Worship Feedback measure, and Liberating Our Spirit Feedback measure assessed whether or not the participants related to the female biblical character presented in the sermon. The feedback measures also explored the sermon content that had the most impact on the participants. Key questions regarding the sermon content were also asked on the feedback measures. More specifically, the participants were asked to provide examples of ways to resolve conflict and if they should be concerned about whether or not onlookers understand their praise on the Soul Pour Feedback form. Participants were asked to define confident worship on the Confident Worship measure. Participants were asked to provide ways to resolve negative thoughts, emotional distress, low self-esteem, and low self-confidence on the Liberating Our Spirit Feedback form.

The Overall Ratings measure assessed participants' perceptions of the interventions with the use of a likert scale. The purpose of the Overall Ratings was to assess the participants' overall views of the ministry project, to determine whether or not the hypothesis was met, and to assess whether or not the participants are interested in participating in relevant ministries in the future. More specifically, the Overall Ratings measure assessed participants' perceptions regarding the Soul Pour Journal, their past experiences with journaling, their likelihood of journaling in the future, and whether or

not the journal prepared them for the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop and the womanist worship experiences. The Overall Ratings measure also assessed participants' perception of the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop, the use of poetry during the workshop, the probability that the participants would participate in future ministries with the women in their congregation, and the possibility that they would attend future womanist worship experiences. The Overall Ratings also assessed the participants' confidence with praising and worshipping overtly. The Soul Pour Prayer Book measure assessed participants' experience with writing a prayer in the prayer book and/or reading the prayer book.

Secondary research utilized pre-test and post-test measures to assess participants' passion for Jesus and worship prior to and following the womanist sermon and to examine their understanding of passionate worship prior to and following a womanist sermon. The Have You Lost Passion For Jesus Feedback measure assessed participants' ability to relate to the female biblical character, explored the sermon content that most impacted the participants, and the relevancy of the sermon to the participants.

Methodology

The participants were given consent forms and assigned numbers for confidentiality purposes prior to participating in the ministry project. The participants submitted all of their paperwork to context associates, who subsequently submitted all of the paperwork to the principal investigator/writer.

The participants were provided with the *Soul Pour Journal* five days prior to the *Empowered Women of Praise Workshop*. The purpose of the Soul Pour Journal was to prompt the participants to engage in private worship with God and to prepare them for the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop and the womanist worship experiences. The women were encouraged to fast from a beverage, a food choice, or an activity of their choice during the five days of journaling to assist them with seeking God and to prompt their deliverance. (Please see Appendix C for the Soul Pour Journal.)

The participants were randomly assigned to one of three focus groups based on their assigned numbers. Two of the focus groups were facilitated by two of the context associates. The principal investigator/writer facilitated one focus group. (Please see Appendix D for the focus group questions.) The participants were also administered the Yes/No Questionnaire prior to the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop. (Please See Appendix E for the Yes/No Questionnaire.)

The participants attended the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop. The workshop included: the I Am A Black Woman activity; the participants' discussion about the positive aspects of their lives and themselves as an introduction to praise; a community Bible study on praise (Ex 15:20-21); the descriptions, definitions, and theology of praise, prayer, testimony, and worship; and a community Bible Study on worship (Jn 4). Poetry was included in the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop.

The participants were divided into two groups based on where they were sitting. They were either assigned as experts of black women or as persons knowledgeable about the stereotypes of black women during the *I Am A Black Woman* activity. The participants read two poems (For Donna by asha bandeled and an untitled poem by Renita

Weems) to guide their discussions. The participants presented their work to the entire group. The purpose of the I Am A Black Woman activity was to provide the participants with an opportunity to have a meaningful discussion regarding their identity as black women.

The purpose of the list making activity regarding the positive aspects of participants' selves and lives was to provide the participants with an opportunity to write positive things about themselves and hear positive things about other women. The list making also served as a tool to transition into a focus on praise.

The writer read Exodus 15:20-21 to the participants. Gospel music was played following the reading of the scripture. The participants were subsequently prompted to sing, dance, shake tambourines, and engage in their preferred form of praise while walking around in a circle following the reading of the scripture. The participants then discussed ways that they related to the scripture and how God has brought them through past circumstances.

The writer read selected verses of John 4 and provided a summary of the chapter. The participants subsequently discussed their understandings of the scripture and how they related to the scripture. The writer directed the participants to write on a piece of paper things that they sought to be delivered from and to fold the paper up. She further prompted the participants to pick up a bucket filled with sand, place their paper in the bucket, and walk to a makeshift altar and talk to Jesus. She also directed the participants to leave the bucket at the altar. The context associates immediately removed the participants' papers and shredded them. Gospel music was playing in the background during the altar call.

The writer prompted the participants to give a testimony. The purpose of the testimonies was to transform the participants into a community of women¹ and to provide them with an experiential tool to praise God. The writer wrote a poem entitled, *Our Testimony* based on the collective testimony of the participants of the workshop.

The participants were provided with breakfast and lunch during the workshop. (Please see Appendix F for the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop material and Appendix G for the Empowered Women Of Praise Poems) The participants were provided with a pre-test and a post-test prior to and following the workshop. Twelve participants completed both a pre-test and a post-test prior to and following the workshop. Unfortunately, six participants only completed a pre-test and two participants only completed a post-test. Thus, only the twelve participants' data were analyzed.

The participants were administered a feedback measure following each womanist worship experience. (Please see Appendix H for the Soul Pour Womanist Worship Experience material, Appendix I for the Confidence Worship Womanist Worship Exp. material, and Appendix J for the Liberating Our Spirit Worship Exp. material) A sermon outline is not provided for the Liberating Our Spirit sermon since the writer preached the sermon extemporaneously. The participants were given an Overall Ratings measure based on their participation in the ministry project. (Please see Appendix K for the Overall Ratings measure.)

Each of the womanist worship experiences included a call to worship, an invocation, a litany, a scripture reading, a women's affirmation, praise and worship selections, the spoken word/sermon, an open to Christian discipleship, an altar call, an

¹Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, *If It Wasn't For The Women* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 137-138.

offering, and a benediction. The Soul Pour Womanist Worship Experience also included the Soul Pour Confession/Hope Altar Call. The Liberating Our Spirit Womanist Worship Experience also included an abbreviated testimony litany, testimonies, and a praise dance. Poetry was included in all three womanist worship experiences. The participants were provided with punch, cake, and cookies following the Liberating Our Spirit Womanist Worship Experience. The women who participated in the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop were presented with certificates for their participation following the Liberating Our Spirit Womanist Worship Experience.

The purpose of the womanist worship experiences was to provide the participants with praise and worship experiences that liberated and empowered them to praise and worship authentically, passionately, and unapologetically and to liberate and empower them overall. The principal investigator/writer preached womanist sermons and prepared womanist worship experiences that were psychologically relevant to the participants and consistent with their lived experiences in an effort to liberate and empower the participants. The scriptures related to the Soul Pour, Confident Worship, and Liberated Our Spirit sermons were 1 Samuel 1:1-20, Luke 8:42b-48, and Luke 13:10-17, respectively. The purpose of the women's affirmation was to encourage the participants to praise God and to remind them of their worth.

Prayer was utilized during the workshop and the womanist worship experiences as an intervention to liberate and empower the women and to strengthen their praise and worship experiences. The purpose of incorporating poetry into the ministry project was to expose the participants to another form of praise and worship and to assist them with relating to the sermon content and female biblical character.

The participants were asked to write a prayer for the Soul Pour Prayer Book. They were given the opportunity to sign their prayers with their actual names or pen names or to sign their prayers anonymously. Nineteen participants wrote prayers for the Soul Pour Prayer Book. One man voluntarily wrote a prayer for the prayer book. Fifteen participants completed and returned the Soul Pour Prayer Book measures. (Please see Appendix L for the Soul Pour Prayer Book.) The purpose of the Soul Pour Prayer Book was to provide the participants with the opportunity to minister to, liberate and empower one another.

Secondary research was conducted following the primary research. Female and male participants were provided a pre-test, a post-test, and a feedback measure prior to and following a womanist sermon entitled, *Have You Lost Your Passion For Jesus*. The sermon utilized Luke 7:36-50 as the scriptural text. (Please see Appendix M for the secondary research pre-test and post-test and Appendix N for the secondary research feedback.)

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

Objective

The objective of this doctor of ministry project is to liberate and empower the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church to praise and worship authentically, passionately, and unapologetically and to liberate and empower them overall through womanist worship experiences.

Collection Of The Data

The participants were administered the Yes/No Questionnaire, a pre-test and post-test prior to and following the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop, the Soul Pour Feedback measure, the Confident Worship Feedback measure, the Liberated Our Spirit Feedback measure, the Overall Ratings measure, and the Soul Pour Prayer Book measure. They also participated in one focus group.

Analysis Of The Data

Yes/No Questionnaire

Fifty percent of the participants, who completed the Yes/No Questionnaire, reported that they have felt judged by others at church by the way they praise and worship. Forty percent of the participants indicated that they felt self-conscious (or anxious or uncomfortable) while praising and worshipping during weekly worship experiences or other church ministries.

Ninety five percent of the participants, who completed the Yes/No Questionnaire, reported that they have felt the Holy Spirit upon them. Five percent of the participants (one participant) noted, "I think" in reference to feeling the Holy Spirit upon them. One hundred percent of the participants indicated that they have felt like praising when they have heard music and when they have heard a prayer. Ninety five percent of the participants indicated that they felt like praising when they have heard a scripture read and when they have heard a sermon preached.

Eighty percent of the participants, who completed the Yes/No Questionnaire, reported that they have prayed with others in addition to weekly worship experiences. Ninety five percent of the participants indicated that they have prayed for others in addition to weekly worship services.

The results of the Yes/No Questionnaire are summarized in the table below:

Table 1

YES/NO QUESTIONNAIRE
50% Felt Judged While Praising And Worshipping
40% Self-Conscious While Praising And Worshipping
95% Felt The Holy Spirit Upon Them (5% "I Think" Felt The Holy Spirit Upon Them)
100% Music And Prayer Prompts Praise
95% Scripture, Reading, Sermon Preached Prompts Praise
80% Prayed With Other's Beyond Sunday Worship
95% Prayed For Others Beyond Sunday Worship

Focus Groups

Across three focus groups, the participants reported that God's presence throughout their lives and their reflection on what God has brought them through prompts them to praise God. Across focus groups, most participants stated that nothing hinders them from praising God. However, some of the participants acknowledged that they get in their way of praising God at times.

Across focus groups, the participants indicated that being black women does not impact the way that they praise God. Most of the participants commented that God does not care about a person's identity and all people are supposed to praise God regardless of their identity. However, one participant acknowledged that women, regardless of race, may be more "emotional" in the manner in which they praise God than men. Another participant stated that being a black woman does impact the way that she praises God

because black women "do things differently." Another participant stated that being raised in the church impacts the way that she praises God as a black woman.

Across focus groups, most participants stated that a person's denomination should not have bearing on the way that they praise God. However, some participants acknowledged that congregations within the CME denomination have been reserved and focused on maintaining order during corporate worship experiences.

The Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop Pre-Test

Ninety four percent of the participants indicated that they felt free to worship in their own way during the pre-test. Six percent of the participants (one participant) circled both yes and no on the question about their felt freedom to praise and worship in their own way. Eighty two percent of the participants indicated that they felt comfortable with expressing or showing their emotions during weekly worship services or other church experiences during the pre-test. Six percent of the participants (one participant) wrote that that they "sometimes" feel comfortable with expressing or showing their emotions during weekly worship services or other church experiences. Six percent of the participants (one participant) indicated that they did not feel comfortable with expressing their emotions during weekly worship services or other church ministries. Six percent of the participants (one participant) did not respond to the item.

A brief summary of the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop pre-test data is listed in the table below:

Table 2

Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop Pre-Test Data
94% Felt Free T Worship In Their Own Way
6% Undecided
82% Felt Comfortable With Expressing/Showing Their Emotions
6% Sometimes Felt Comfortable With Expressing/Showing Their Emotions
6% Did Not Feel Comfortable With Expressing/Showing Their Emotions
6% No Response

As a group, the participants defined praise as thanking and honoring God. They reported that the purpose of praise is to show God how thankful a person is for what God has done and to adore God. They also indicated that the benefits of praise are blessings.

Collectively, the participants defined worship as a form of praise and a way to honor, adore, admire, and love God. They reported that the purpose of worship is praising God. They indicated that the benefits of worship are rewards, blessings, and a release.

As a group, the participants defined testimony as a person telling others what God has brought the person through. They reported that the purpose of a testimony is to witness to others, to help others, and to give thanksgiving to God for what God has done in a person's life.

Collectively, the participants indicated that black women's roles in praise and worship are to be strong in faith and close to God and to show others that they love the

Lord. They also stated that black women should utilize praise and worship as a tool to get through circumstances and to help their families get through circumstances.

The Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop Post-Test

At post-test, 100% of the participants reported that they feel free to praise or worship in their own way. One hundred percent of the participants indicated that they are comfortable with showing or expressing their emotions during weekly worship services and church ministries. A brief summary of the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop post-test data is listed in the table below:

Table 3

Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop Post-Test Data
100% Felt Free To Worship In Their Own Way
100% Felt Comfortable With Expressing /Showing Their Emotions

As a group, the participants defined praise as honoring God, giving God the glory, and thanking God for what God has done. They reported that the purpose of praise is to thank God and to deepen one's relationship with God. They indicated that the benefits of praise are blessings, bringing in the presence of God, and the glorification of God.

Collectively, the participants defined worship as acknowledging God for who God is, giving God glory, praising God, and being intimate with God or feeling God's presence. They indicated that the purpose of worship is to experience God's presence, celebrate salvation, commune with God, and deepen one's relationship with God. They reported that the benefits of worship are communing with God, deepening one's relationship with God, and encouraging others.

As a group, the participants defined testimony as telling others what God has done in a person's life or what God has brought them through and talking about the goodness of Jesus. They indicated that the purpose of a testimony is to share the goodness of God with others, to encourage others, and to transform people. Collectively, the participants reported that black women's roles in praise and worship are to praise and worship in the presence of God and in the midst of others.

During the *I Am A Black Woman* activity, the participants identified the following as common stereotypes of black women: assertive (angry); aggressive; lack of focus; low self-esteem; lack of faith; too opinionated; bad attitude; bossy; drama/messy; jealous; lack of love; selfish; and lack encouragement.

The participants who were experts on black women identified the following attributes of black women: strong; wear many hats; intelligent; spiritual; nurturing; age gracefully; resourceful; committed; loyal; beautiful; stylish; love themselves; opinionated; compassion for community; sacrificial; family oriented; confident; morals/standards; successful; educated; and great.

Soul Pour Womanist Worship Experience

With regards to how they relate to Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:1-20, the participants collectively reported that they trust in God and they have been concerned about what others thought about them on the Soul Pour Feedback measure. One hundred percent of the participants indicated that praise does not have to be understood by onlookers. With regards to ways to cope with conflict and/or begin to resolve conflict, the participants reported that they could pray, seek guidance from God, call on the name of Jesus, give it

to the Lord, and "deal with it." Regarding what they received from the sermon, the participants indicated that they learned that they should pray to God, God will supply their every need, they should give their burdens to God, God will bless them, and they can get a release. Eighty six percent of the women reported that the sermon was greatly applicable to their life and the message was clear. Seven percent indicated that the sermon was somewhat applicable to their life and the message was somewhat clear. One participant opted not to rate the sermon, but wrote, "The message was very clear. Good word."

The participants selected the following as the top five aspects of the Soul Pour womanist

worship experience:

Table 4

Soul Pour Preferred Aspects Of Worship
The spoken word/sermon with twelve votes
Praise and worship musical selections with ten votes
The altar call with eight votes
The scripture with seven votes
The women's affirmation with six votes

Regarding their overall worship experience, 71% of the participants reported that "it was a great worship experience." Twenty nine percent of the participants indicated that "it was a good worship experience." With regards to the inclusion of poetry in the sermon, 71% of the participants reported that "it highlighted other areas of the

revival/worship experience in a great way." Twenty nine percent reported that "it highlighted other areas of the revival/worship experience in a good way."

The results of the Soul Pour Feedback Measure is below:

Table 5

Soul Pour Feedback Measure
100% Not Concerned By Onlookers
86% Sermon Greatly Applicable
7% Sermon Somewhat Applicable
71% Great Worship Experience
29% Good Worship Experience
71% Poetry Highlighted Other Areas Greatly
29% Poetry Highlighted Other Areas In A Good Way

Confident Worship Womanist Worship Experience

Collectively, the participants indicated that they related to the woman with issues of blood in that they have called onto Jesus for help, they have had faith that God would restore them to health or make them whole, and Jesus has touched them. The participants also identified themselves as having "issues," as having a similar blood condition, and enduring unemployment. As a group, the participants defined confident worship as having faith and being bold in seeking the Lord and in seeking God's presence; to be free to worship and to not be ashamed to worship or one not being concerned about others' perceptions of one's worship; and one trusting in God to meet one's needs. Regarding what the women received from the sermon, they indicated that they learned about the importance of faith, in believing in the Lord, and trusting in God. They also reported that they learned that they are important to Jesus, they can be healed immediately, and Jesus will meet their needs. Eighty one percent of the participants indicated that the sermon "was greatly applicable to my life and the message was clear." Twelve percent of the

participants reported that the sermon "was somewhat applicable to my life and the message was somewhat clear." One participant did not respond to the item.

The participants selected the following as the top five aspects of the Confident Worship womanist worship experience:

Table 6

Confident Worship Preferred Aspects Of Worship
Spoken word/sermon with 12 votes
Praise and worship selections with 8 votes
Altar Call with 6 votes
Scripture with 5 votes
Women's affirmation with 5 votes

Eighty eight percent of the participants reported that "it was a great worship experience." Twelve percent of the participants indicated that "it was a good worship experience." One hundred percent of the participants reported that the poetry was "relevant and greatly added to the revival/worship experience."

The results of the Confident Worship Feedback Measure is below:

Table 7

Confident Worship Feedback Measure
81% Sermon Greatly Applicable
12% Sermon Somewhat Applicable
80% Great Worship Experience
12% Good Worship Experience
100% Poetry Relevant

Liberating Our Spirit Womanist Worship Experience

With regards to how the participants saw themselves in the woman with the spirit, the participants collectively indicated that they can relate to the woman due to their ailments, pain, grief, illness, and mental and emotional concerns. Additionally, they

reported that they relate to the woman because they go to Jesus when they are in need, they depend on God, they believe and trust in God, and they believe that God will heal them. Regarding how the participants can rid themselves of negative spirits, thoughts, or emotional distress, the participants collectively stated that they can do the above through prayer, focusing on God and trusting in God, praising God, seeking the Lord for strength and refuge, focusing on the Lord, giving themselves to God, asking God to remove their negative thoughts, and reading the Bible. In terms of what they received from the sermon, the participants indicated that God is their all and all, God/Jesus will lift them up, obedience to God leads to healing, they should praise God for healing them, they should go to God for healing, and God will bring them through.

Eighty nine percent of the women rated the sermon as "greatly applicable to my life and the message was clear." Eleven percent of the participants (two participants) did not respond to the item.

The participants selected the following as the most preferred aspects of the Liberating Our Spirit womanist worship experience:

Table 8

Liberating Our Spirit Preferred Aspects Of Worship
Sermon with 15 votes
Praise dance with 10 votes
Testimony with 9 votes
Praise and worship musical selections with 9 votes
Scripture with 7 votes
Women's Affirmation with 7 votes

Ninety five percent of the participants rated the worship experience as "a great worship experience." Five percent of the participants rated the worship experience as "a good worship experience." Ninety five percent of the participants indicated that the

poetry "was relevant and greatly added to the revival/worship experience." Five percent of the participants (one person) did not respond to the item.

The results of the Liberating Our Spirit Feedback Measure is below:

Table 9

Liberating Our Spirit Feedback Measure
89% Sermon Greatly Applicable
95% Great Worship Experience
95% Poetry Greatly Added To Worship Experience

Overall Ratings

Twelve participants completed the Overall Ratings form. One hundred percent of the participants reported that "the journal greatly assisted me with reflecting on my life and God's role/presence in my life." Twenty five percent of the participants indicated that they had engaged in journaling prior to the current project. Fifty percent reported that they have not engaged in journaling prior to the current project. Seventeen percent responded yes/no to the item. Eight percent did not accurately respond to the item. Sixty seven percent of the participants reported that the Soul Pour Journal prepared them for the workshop. Twenty five percent of the participants indicated that the question was not applicable and eight percent of the participants responded yes/no to the item. Ninety two percent of the participants reported that the Soul Pour Journal prepared them for the worship experiences. Eight percent of the participants (one participant) indicated that the item was not applicable. Forty two percent of the participants reported that they are "very likely to begin/resume writing in a journal" following the project, another forty two percent indicated that they are "somewhat likely to begin/resume writing in a journal"

following the project, 8% (one person) indicated that they were "undecided," and one participant indicated that the item was not applicable.

One hundred percent of the participants rated the Empowered Women of Praise Workshop as "very empowering/experiential/informative." Eighty three percent of the participants reported that the poetry "greatly added to discussion/learning" during the workshop. Seventeen percent of the participants indicated that the poetry "moderately added to discussion/learning" during the workshop.

Ninety two percent of the participants indicated that they are "very likely" to continue to meet with the women of their congregation to learn about specific subjects as well as to womanship with one another. However, eight percent of the participants (one person) indicated that they were somewhat likely to very likely to continue to meet with the women of their congregation to learn about specific subjects as well as to womanship with one another. (The aforementioned participant circled both responses.) One hundred percent of the participants indicated that they are "very likely" to participate in future women's worship experiences. Regarding confidence with praising and worshipping overtly and freely during worship experiences, 75% percent of the participants reported that they are "very confident" and 25% indicated that they are "moderately confident."

Only nine of the twelve participants responded to the item regarding the Our Testimony Poem. This is likely due to the last item being on another page and the possibility that all participants were not given the second page. Out of the nine participants, 100% of the participants reported that the Our Testimony Poem "was very empowering/encouraging."

The Overall Ratings Measure Table is presented below:

Table 10

Journal	Workshop	Women	Praise & Worship	Our Testimony Poem
100% Journal Greatly Assisted With Reflecting	100% Workshop Very Empowering, Experiential, And Informative	92% Very Likely To Meet With Other Women For Womanship	75% Very Confident With Praising And Worshipping Overtly	100% Our Testimony Poem Very Empowering And Uplifting
67% Journal Prepared Them For Workshop	83% Poetry Greatly Added To Workshop	8% Somewhat Likely To Meet With Other Women For Womanship	25% Moderately Confident With Praising And Worshipping Overtly	
92% Journal Prepared Them For Worship Experiences	17% Poetry Moderately Added To Workshop	100% Very Likely To Participate In Womanist Worship		
42% Very Likely To Begin/Resume Writing In A Journal				
42% Somewhat Likely To Begin/Resume Writing In A Journal				
8% Undecided				

Soul Pour Prayer Book Ratings

Four of the participants who completed the prayer ratings had not contributed to the Soul Pour Prayer Book. Therefore, they were only able to answer one question. Seventy five percent of those participants indicated that reading the Soul Pour Prayer Book "was extremely uplifting and liberating." Twenty five percent of those participants reported that the Soul Pour Prayer Book "was very uplifting and liberating."

Eleven of the participants who completed the prayer ratings contributed to the Soul Pour Prayer Book. Forty five percent of those participants reported that writing a prayer for the Soul Pour Prayer Book "was extremely rewarding and freeing." Another forty five percent of those participants indicated that writing a prayer for the Soul Pour Prayer Book "was very rewarding and freeing." Nine percent of those participants (one participant) reported that writing in the prayer book "was somewhat rewarding and freeing."

Thirty six percent of those participants reported that reading the Soul Pour Prayer Book "was very uplifting and liberating." Fifty five percent of those participants indicated that reading the Soul Pour Prayer Book "was extremely uplifting and liberating." Nine percent of those participants (one participant) reported that reading the Soul Pour Prayer Book "was not uplifting and liberating." The aforementioned participant is the same participant who rated writing a prayer as "somewhat rewarding and freeing." She informed the writer both in person and in writing the reason that she did not have a positive experience with the prayer book. She wrote, "I was disappointed when I compared my presentation to those who are prayers. I'm not a public prayer." Her verbal comment to the writer was similar to her written comment. It is worthy to note that the

aforementioned participant did not participate in the workshop or any of the worship experiences. However, she voluntarily submitted a prayer for the prayer book.

The Soul Pour Prayer Book Table is presented below:

Table 11

Read Prayer Only	Prayer Writing	Prayer Reading
75% Extremely Uplifting And Liberating	45% Extremely Uplifting And Liberating	36% Very Uplifting And Rewarding
25% Very Uplifting And Liberating	45% Very Uplifting And Liberating	55% Extremely Uplifting And Rewarding
	9% Somewhat Uplifting And Liberating	9% Not Uplifting And Rewarding

Outcome

The data from the Yes/No Questionnaire suggested that the participants have felt judged for their style of praise during corporate worship experiences and have felt self-conscious about praising God. The data also demonstrated that the participants are prompted to praise God through various religious practices. The data from the Yes/No Questionnaire suggested that the participants pray beyond weekly worship experiences with others and for others.

The information gathered from the focus groups demonstrated that the participants are prompted to praise God due to God's presence in their lives and God's history of bringing them through unpleasant circumstances. The data also suggests that the participants perceive that they and are not typically hindered to praise God. The information from the focus groups suggests that the participants do not perceive that their identities as black women and members of the CME denomination impact the manner in which they praise God.

All of the participants reported that journaling in the Soul Pour Journal assisted them with reflecting on their lives and on God's presence in their lives. The majority of the participants indicated that journaling prepared them for the Empowered Women of Praise Workshop and for the womanist worship experiences. Forty two percent of the participants indicated that they are very likely to continue journaling.

The participants' felt freedom to praise and worship in their own way improved by 6% from the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop pre-test to post-test. Likewise, the participants' comfort level in expressing or sharing their emotions improved by 17% from the pre-test to the post-test. All of the participants reported that the Empowered Women of Praise Workshop was empowering, experiential, and informative. The majority of the participants indicated that the integration of poetry into the workshop greatly added to discussion and learning. The majority of the participants reported that they are very likely to meet with the women of their congregation to learn about relevant subjects for women and to womanship together.

The participants related to the female biblical characters and perceived that the sermons were relevant to them during the womanist worship experiences. They perceived that the poetry contributed to the sermon and tended to enjoy the womanist worship experiences. All of the participants indicated that onlookers do not have to understand their praise. All of the participants reported that they are very likely to participate in future women's worship experiences.

Seventy five percent of the participants reported that they are very confident about praising and worshipping overtly and freely during worship experiences; whereas twenty five percent indicated that they are moderately confident. All of the participants, who

responded to the item regarding the Our Testimony poem, reported that the poem was empowering and encouraging.

The data suggests that the majority of the participants who completed the Soul Pour Prayer Book measure found the writing of a prayer and/or the reading of the prayer book to be liberating and empowering.

Triangulation By Method

The Yes/No Questionnaire, the Empowered Women of Praise Workshop Pre-Test and Post-Test, and the feedback forms from the three womanist worship experiences demonstrate that the participants were knowledgeable about praise and worship prior to the interventions.

The Yes/No Questionnaire, the Focus Group Questions, and the feedback forms from the three womanist worship experiences demonstrate that the participants have experience with praising and worshipping God.

The Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop pre-test and post-test, the Soul Pour Feedback measure, and the Overall Ratings measure demonstrate that the participants were more free to praise and worship in their own way following the interventions in this doctor of ministry project.

The feedback measures from the Soul Pour Womanist Worship Experience, the Confident Worship Womanist Worship Experience, and the Liberating Our Spirit Womanist Worship Experience demonstrate that the participants relate to female biblical characters.

The feedback measures from the Soul Pour Womanist Worship Experience, the Confident Worship Womanist Worship Experience, and the Liberating Our Spirit Womanist Worship Experience demonstrate that the participants perceive that womanist sermons are relevant to them. Moreover, the feedback measures from the Soul Pour Womanist Worship Experience, the Confident Worship Womanist Worship Experience, and the Liberating Our Spirit Womanist Worship Experience suggest that the women perceived the womanist worship experiences to be "great" worship experiences.

The feedback measures from the Soul Pour Womanist Worship Experience, the Confident Worship Womanist Worship Experience, and the Liberating Our Spirit Womanist Worship Experience demonstrate that the participants perceived that the inclusion of poetry into the sermons contributed to the sermons and were relevant to the sermons.

The feedback measures from the Soul Pour Womanist Worship Experience, the Confident Worship Womanist Worship Experience, and the Liberating Our Spirit Womanist Worship Experience demonstrate that the participants preferred the sermon, praise and worship musical selections, scripture, and the women's affirmation to other worship modalities.

The ratings on the feedback forms from the three womanist worship experiences, the Overall Ratings Measure, and the Soul Pour Prayer Book demonstrate that the participants are open to various modes of praise and worship, such as journaling, poetry, and prayer.

The feedback measures from the three womanist worship experiences, the Overall Ratings measure, and the Soul Pour Prayer Book ratings demonstrate that the ministry project was liberating and empowering to the participants.

Writer's Observation During Workshop

Most of the participants were gregarious at the beginning of the workshop. They appeared to prefer to socialize and eat the provided breakfast over completing paperwork. Therefore, the context associates and writer prompted them to complete the paperwork several times. Most of the participants were fully engaged throughout the workshop.

Some participants readily gave a testimony after the writer prompted them to give testimonies. However, other participants were hesitant. Ultimately, all participants gave testimonies. The participants encouraged each other to give their testimonies and made comments or clapped after participants gave their testimonies. Following one such testimony regarding an illness, one participant suggested that the group pray for a participant who was struggling with an illness. However, the participant did not follow through with her request. Therefore, the writer strongly encouraged the participant to call the other participants into the center of the chairs and tables for prayer. The participant obliged. The participant in need of prayer was prayed over by the participant who initiated the group prayer. All participants circled the participant in need of prayer. The participant who was the recipient of the prayer appeared to be responsive to the prayer in that she praised God and cried. The participant who initiated the prayer appeared to be empowered in that she also praised God. All of the participants appeared to be connected emotionally and spiritually at the time of the prayer and immediately following the prayer

in that they hugged and praised God together. The writer gave her testimony last in an effort to avoid coloring the participants' testimonies.

The participants had to eat the provided lunch during the workshop activities, were unable to write their prayers for the prayer book during the workshop as initially planned, and remained an extra thirty minutes upon the request of the writer. The above occurred because the focus groups did not start on time, there were too many prescribed activities with the time allotted, and the participants took an extensive amount of time to complete pre-tests and the Yes/No Questionnaire.

Testimonials

The Soul Pour Project was an awesome experience. The journal and fasting period was very influential in the process because it set us up to receive what God had in store for us. The workshop was wonderful. It allowed us to have an open conversation on what we wanted out of our praise and worship service at our local church. The whole experience was SUPERB! Participant A

My experience in this class was extremely informative. Being involved in the mini group session allowed me to feel comfortable to share my opinions and thoughts and to hear others. Even though I was unable to complete the experience, I would be willing to participate again. I left wanting to hear more. It was inspiring to spend time with myself focusing on our Lord. I now know (I CAN!) include time in reading with our Lord during my day-to-day routine by keeping a daily journal. It was a wonderful experience and I appreciate the lesson that was learned. Participant B

I enjoyed the entire religious fellowship. The workshop was eye opening to see women congregated as one. The revival was very uplifting, joyful and enlightening. I also enjoyed the Prayer Book and will keep it forever. I have always loved praising the Lord, but since Dr. Allen-Staton presented

this wonderful celebration I have become more aware of how freeing it is..... Participant C

Congratulation on completing your dissertation. We are very proud of you and the way the women meeting brought us together. God has healed my body and my mind. God is my strength and my refuge. Attending the women's meeting helped me learn and focus on God and surrender my all to him. God supplies all of my needs and he is the head of my life. Thank you for allowing us to surrender our life to God. God Bless and keep you. We love you. Participant D

It was unbelievable! The workshop truly changed the way we worship at Harris Memorial CME Church. Many of the non-worshippers started praising more and the others' worship was enhanced during Sunday's service. Participating in the Empowered Women of Praise Workshop enabled the women (us) to be liberated in our praise. Forgetting the presence of others and focusing on our Savior, giving Him the honor, glory and praise.

We entered the facility as Christian women and emerged filled with the Holy Spirit. We had been liberated. Prior to the workshop, we had to fast and write in our Soul Pour Journal daily. So, once we arrived we were primed for whatever God had in store for us; little did we know the impact this workshop would have on our spiritual lives. We participated in a spiritual binding and unforgettable workshop, which included the following: focus groups, praising God like Miriam, testimony time and other activities which lead up to the most impactful experience of the workshop.

The last experience involved the following: writing a deliverance you wanted on a piece of paper, placing it in a heavy bucket of sand, carrying it up to a make shift altar and spending time with God praying. When finished praying, the paper was placed in the shredder and you were set free of that problem/situation. It was powerful watching the ladies leave the altar and literally floating back to their seats, filled with the Holy Spirit.

Were we really liberated? Well, our Sunday morning services indeed look differently each week. I have noticed the women that attended the workshop are praising and worshipping God with all their heart and soul more than before and the ones that praised freely prior to the workshop

have taken their praise to a higher level. This liberation has caused other members within the church to experience God in a more spiritual sense as well. Wow! God is so good!

The women at Harris Memorial truly thank Candace for providing this magnificent workshop in which it liberated us to worship freely and to magnify the Lord. But beyond a shadow of doubt, it stirred up and set the Holy Spirit free within us. We have a greater appreciation for true worship. Participant E

Candace, I will always remember that little shy, but poised lady, who came to church faithfully with her mother and never left her side. You were very smart; a great poetic and praise dancer, and yet so reserved. You were in the process of completing your master's degree at the University of Dayton. I remember asking you to be our director of Christian Education and help our youth by bringing new life to our Educational Ministry, which was stuck in the late seventies. You accepted the assignment and with much grace and determination. You brought the church's educational ministry new life and direction.

I have been with you through the last half of your educational journey. You received your masters from the University of Dayton and your PsyD from Wright State University. We assisted you when needed, licensed you to preach the Gospel, and watched your ministry develop and flourish.

When you requested to do your final project for the Doctor of Ministry degree at Harris Memorial CME Church, we were overjoyed. I asked the members to assist you in doing your final project. Then, I moved out of your way because I trusted and respected you. Your project yielded immediate and continual results.

Because your project has yield great results, I recommend that you reduce your project to a booklet and allow other congregations to benefit from it. Finally, we extend to you an open invitation with notice to us of your availability and no conflict with our schedule to return and continue the work you have started. Participant F

Secondary Research

Women's Feedback

At pre-test, 69% of the women participants indicated that they were "very passionate" about Jesus, 19% reported that they were "passionate" about Jesus, 6% indicated that they were "moderately passionate" about Jesus, and another 6% reported that they were "somewhat passionate" about Jesus. Also at pre-test, 69% of the women participants reported that they were "very passionate" about worship, 13% indicated that they were "passionate" about worship, another 13% reported that they were "moderately passionate" about worship, and 6% indicated that they were "somewhat passionate" about worship. Collectively at pre-test, the women participants defined passionate worship as sincere worship that comes from the heart and that ushers in the presence of the Holy Spirit and allows the Holy Spirit to have the Holy Spirit's way. They further defined passionate worship as seeking the Lord, involving an intimate relationship with God and the Lord, giving oneself to God, allowing God in one's heart, and showing God love.

At post-test, 63% of the women participants reported that they were "very passionate" about Jesus, 25% indicated that they were "passionate" about Jesus, 6% reported that they were "moderately passionate" about Jesus, and another 6% indicated that they were "somewhat passionate" about Jesus. At post-test, 62.5% of the women participants reported that they were "very passionate" about worship, 25% indicated that they were "passionate" about worship, and 12.5% reported that they were "moderately passionate" about worship. At post-test, the women participants collectively defined passionate worship as allowing the Holy Spirit to have the Holy Spirit's way in worship, as one having an intimate interaction with Jesus, loving, serving, adoring, and thanking

the Lord, not being ashamed of praising the Lord, and worshipping consistently beyond Sunday morning.

As a group, the women participants reported that they related to the woman with the alabaster jar in that they have faith in the Lord and they love the Lord. As a group, the women participants indicated that the sermon provoked them to think about ways that they can become more passionate about Jesus and prompted them to be more passionate about Jesus and worship and to recommit themselves to Jesus. With regards to how relevant the sermon was, 69% of the women participants reported that it was "very relevant," 6% indicated that it was "moderately relevant," and 12.5% reported that it was "somewhat relevant." Twelve and a half percent of the women participants (2 women participants) did not rate the sermon regarding its relevancy.

Men's Feedback

At pre-test, 100% of the men participants reported that they were "very passionate" about Jesus and "very passionate" about worship. As a group, the men participants defined passionate worship as prayer and believing; being true to the Holy Spirit; thanking the Holy Spirit and praising the Holy Spirit; faithfully exalting the Lord in the highest praise; and loosing oneself and problems in God.

At post-test, 100% of the men participants reported that they were "very passionate" about Jesus and "very passionate" about worship. They defined passionate worship at post-test as giving all emotional aspects of one's essence of being to the Spirit of God; exalting the Lord with the highest praise; and being in tune with the Holy Spirit.

The male participants did not have a shared theme in regards to how they related to the woman with the alabaster jar. However, individually, they indicated that they related to the woman with the alabaster jar in that she recognized that Jesus was the king of all kings and she did not care what anybody thought about her worship to Jesus. Additionally, they reported that they related to the woman with the alabaster jar in that they worship and repent for sin and they are focused and committed to church and God. The men participants indicated that the sermon touched them because "it was all real talk" and was "delivered with passion" and persons should be able to praise without judgment. One hundred percent of the male participants reported that the sermon was "very relevant" to them.

Unidentified Genders' Feedback

At pre-test, 100% of the unidentified gender participants indicated that they were "very passionate" about Jesus. Seventy five percent of the unidentified gender participants reported that they were "very passionate" about worship. Twenty five percent of the unidentified gender participants indicated that they were "passionate" about worship. Collectively, the unidentified gender participants defined passionate worship as lifting up God's name in praise and letting God's Spirit move daily, giving oneself to the Spirit in the service, attending worship services, singing, praying, reading the Bible, learning from sermons, and being on church boards and ministries.

At post-test, 100% of the unidentified gender participants indicated that they were "very passionate" about Jesus. Seventy five percent of the unidentified gender participants reported that they were "very passionate" about worship. Twenty five percent

of the unidentified gender participants indicated that they were "passionate" about worship. Collectively, the unidentified gender participants defined passionate worship as giving oneself to the Spirit of the service, praising God and being focused on God, attending church services, and being on boards and ministries.

Regarding how they relate to the woman with the alabaster jar, the unidentified gender participants indicated that they love the Lord. With regards to what touched them the most during the sermon, the unidentified gender participants indicated that focusing on Jesus, honoring him, loving him, and being in awe of him reached them the most. Seventy five percent of the unidentified gender participants reported that the sermon "was very relevant to me." Twenty five percent of the unidentified gender participants reported that the sermon "was moderately relevant to me."

Overall, the secondary research demonstrated that men may be impacted by womanist sermons, may relate to female biblical characters, and may perceive womanist sermons to be relevant to them. The data further suggests that the male participants were more passionate about Jesus and worship than the female participants at pre-test and post-test. Data also suggests that the male participants perceived that the womanist sermon was more relevant to them than the female participants perceived it.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

Summary And Conclusions

The hypothesis of this ministry project is if the women of Harris Memorial CME Church are exposed to authentic, passionate, and unapologetic womanist worship experiences, they will be liberated and empowered to praise and worship in their own way and liberated and empowered in general. Overall, the hypothesis was met.

The writer provided the participants with various opportunities to praise and worship. The opportunities for praise and worship included the Soul Pour Journal, the Empowered Women of Praise Workshop, the Soul Pour Womanist Worship Experience, the Confident Worship Womanist Worship Experience, the Liberated Our Spirit Womanist Worship Experience, and the Soul Pour Prayer Book.

All of the participants reported that the journal "greatly assisted them with reflecting on their lives and God's role/presence in their lives." Over half of the participants reported that the Soul Pour Journal prepared them for the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop. Over ninety percent of the participants indicated that the Soul Pour Journal prepared them for the worship experiences. Less than half of the participants indicated that they are "very likely" to continue to journal. Less than half of the participants reported that they are "somewhat likely" to continue to journal. These

results suggests that journaling served as a ministry that prepared the participants for corporate worship experiences and that increased their insight into their lives and their relationship with God. These results also suggest that journaling may serve as a useful ministry for approximately half of the women at Harris Memorial CME Church.

Based on the participants' responses on the Yes/No Questionnaire, half of the participants felt judged by others for their style of praise and worship during corporate worship experiences. Additionally, less than half of the participants felt self-conscious or uncomfortable during corporate worship experiences. These results highlight the fact that corporate praise and worship at Harris Memorial CME Church is constrained by at-least half of the women at Harris Memorial CME Church due to discomfort that they feel in the worship environment.

The majority of the participants have felt the Holy Spirit upon them, have felt like praising God when they have heard music, prayers, the reading of scripture, and a sermon. The majority of the participants have also prayed beyond Sunday morning with others and for others. This suggests that praise resides within the women participants of the current ministry project and that multiple modes of religious practices prompts praise from them.

The information gathered from the three focus groups suggest that the participants are prompted to praise God because of God's presence in their lives and God's history of bringing them through unpleasant circumstances. The data also suggests that the participants perceived that they were rarely hindered from praising God. The data further suggests that the participants do not perceive that their identities as black women or as members of the CME congregation impact the way that they praise.

Over ninety percent of the participants reported that they felt free to praise and worship in their own way on the pre-test measure given prior to the workshop. Likewise, over eighty percent of the participants indicated that they felt comfortable with expressing or showing their emotions during weekly worship services or other church experiences during the pre-test. These results, interpreted alone, are misleading as they suggest that the women participants of Harris Memorial CME Church are minimally restrained and uncomfortable during corporate worship experiences at the church. However, the results of the Yes/No Questionnaire described previously demonstrate that the women participants have been reserved in their corporate worship and have felt uncomfortable during corporate worship experiences. This discrepancy suggests that the participants may have limited insight into their difficulties with praising and worshipping, are ambivalent about their praise and worship experiences, or are resistant or avoidant about acknowledging that they are not completely free to praise and worship in their own way.

At post-test, all of the participants reported that they felt free to praise and worship in their own way. At post-test, all of the participants reported that they were comfortable with expressing or showing their emotions during weekly worship services or other church ministries. These results suggests that the workshop was successful in liberating the participants to praise and worship authentically, passionately, and unapologetically.

Based on the participants' pre-test definitions of praise, worship, and testimony and their reported benefits and purposes of praise, worship, and testimony, the participants appeared to have a firm understanding of the concepts prior to the workshop.

The data from the feedback forms suggest that the three womanist worship experiences and sermons were relevant, liberating, and empowering to the participants. The data from the feedback forms further demonstrated that the women participants enjoyed multiple methods of praise and worship. Based on their selections across womanist worship experiences, the participants preferred the sermon, praise and worship musical selections, the altar call, the scripture, the women's affirmation, and testimony over other aspects of the worship experiences. Additionally, the participants' ratings demonstrate that poetry may serve as a ministry tool to the women of Harris Memorial CME Church. The participants' ratings suggest that the women participants are "very likely" to attend future womanist worship experiences.

A comparison in data between the Yes/No Questionnaire and the Overall Ratings suggest that there was an improvement in the participants' confidence in praising and worshipping overtly and freely and feeling comfortable praising and worshipping during corporate worship experiences.

Data suggests that writing a prayer for the Soul Pour Prayer Book and/or reading the Soul Pour Prayer Book was liberating and empowering for the participants. Thus, an ongoing prayer book ministry may be a worthwhile ministry for the women of Harris Memorial CME Church.

Secondary Research

The data suggests that the male and unidentified gendered persons were more passionate about Jesus and worship at pre-test and post-test than the female participants.

The data further suggests that more of the male participants perceived that the womanist sermon was relevant to them than the female participants and unidentified gendered participants. Overall, the data suggests that men may be inspired by womanist preaching and may be able to relate to female biblical characters. However, additional research is needed in order to confirm these findings due to the minimal data gathered and the fact that qualitative analyses cannot be readily generalized to other populations.

The direction of the results was surprising. Prior to conducting the secondary research, the writer thought that the female participants would have found the sermon to be more relevant to them than the male participants.

The writer speculates that the female participants may have thought that the sermon was less relevant to them because the female biblical character was described as a sinner and outcast by Luke. The writer also speculates that the female participants may have perceived that the sermon was less relevant to them since they may not be completely free to praise and worship or express their emotions in front of others as the woman with the alabaster jar did in Luke 7:36-50.

Improved Model

The administration of a needs assessment prior to the implementation of the ministry model would better prepare the writer with developing relevant workshops and womanist worship experiences in the future. This ministry model may be improved by having the focus groups on a separate day from the workshop. This would enable the facilitators of the focus groups to ask additional questions regarding praise and worship and to probe the participants for follow-up responses. This would also provide the

participants with more time to womanship and write prayers for the Soul Pour Prayer Book during the workshop.

This ministry model may be enhanced by having five womanist worship experiences instead of three womanist worship experiences. This would provide the participants with more opportunities to worship the Holy Trinity through womanist worship experiences. Luke 7:36-50 would serve as one of the scriptures for the fourth or fifth womanist worship experience.

The inclusion of a workshop on womanist theology and womanist worship experiences would greatly add to this project. This would teach the participants about a new theology that celebrates them and would enable them to conduct womanist worship experiences independent of the writer. Likewise, this ministry model may be improved by having an in-service training/workshop with the female and male clergy and all others who participate in corporate worship experiences (i.e., accolades, ushers, choir members, stewardesses, stewards, worship leaders, musicians, laypersons doing announcements) on womanist worship experiences and authentic, passionate, and unapologetic worship experiences. This would serve to provide churches with resources to provide worship experiences that meet the needs of their congregations.

Future Ministry

The writer may develop and implement future womanist worship experiences and womanship opportunities at Harris Memorial CME Church since the data suggests that the women are interested in attending future womanist worship experiences. The writer also plans on implementing the improved model to other churches. She is interested in

beginning or improving existing women's ministries at other churches. The writer wants to preach revival across churches and denominations and wants to utilize her gifts as a psychologist and as a preacher to liberate, empower, and heal God's people.

Implications For Future Research

Future research should study the impact of praise and worship on transforming a broken Body of Christ into a whole Body of Christ. For example, the use of testimony may be an effective tool to heal a body of Christ. The participants commented that the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop in general and the testimony period in particular helped bring them closer following the many years of conflict and division that they endured.

Additional qualitative and quantitative research is need in the area of black women's experiences and perceptions on praise and worship given the limited research in this area. Additional research may also study black women's perception of oppression within the Black Church in comparison to their perception of oppression external to the Black Church. Future research may also study black women's ability to embrace their identity as black women across situations (i.e., church, home, place of employment, school).

Future research should further study the impact of womanist preaching on black women and black men as it was initially puzzling to the writer that the men found the sermon presented to the congregation as more relevant to them than the women. In order to understand the differential impact of womanist sermons on black women and black men, additional open ended questions should be added to the feedback forms and a

womanist sermon series should be presented to congregations. It may also be necessary to repeat the study as a quantitative study to obtain results that may be generalized across churches.

Writer's Reflections On Field Experience

Developing the Soul Pour Journal was a spiritual, cathartic, and rewarding experience for the writer. She cried, prayed, and reflected on her life and the awesomeness of God as she developed the Soul Pour Journal. The Empowered Women of Praise Workshop was a fun, insightful, and deeply spiritual experience for the writer as she witnessed the secular location of the workshop become transformed into a worship atmosphere. She also learned about the participants' humanity and love that they have for their church family and biological families. The writer believes that the Empowered Women Of Praise Workshop was a spiritual and communal experience due to the collective presence of the women who were gathered for the workshop.

The writer was initially bothered that the participants did not perceive that their identity as black women impacted the way that they praise. However, she was able to better understand the participants' responses after she reflected on how she wanted to be viewed as a therapist/future psychologist versus a black therapist/future black psychologist when she was 23 years old and the only black woman and person in a master of arts program in clinical psychology at the University of Dayton.

The womanist worship experiences were powerful, dynamic, heart-felt, authentic, and spiritual for the writer. She felt the presence of the Holy Spirit during the womanist

worship experiences. She also felt alive and fulfilled while she preached and prayed amongst the women participants during the altar calls.

The writer was encouraged by the worship leader, Reverend Evelyn Mathis, who is an ordained elder in the CME Church. Reverend Mathis provided encouragement to the writer after the writer informed her that she was nervous on the first night of the womanist worship experiences due to forgetting her sermon outline at home. The writer was confident to preach her sermon extemporaneously as the Holy Spirit had been leading her to do since she began preaching from outlines in 2007 after her brief encounter with Reverend Mathis. The writer was inspired by Reverend Mathis when she proclaimed that the writer was "preaching power" to the women and exclaimed that she was inspired to start a women's ministry at her church due to her experiences at the womanist worship experiences.

The writer added the secondary research to the current doctor of ministry project after a couple of people asked about her rationale for not focusing on the entire congregation and after she read Delores Williams' perspective on womanist worship (please see chapter two), which included entire congregations. Unfortunately, the writer was not initially confident enough to voice to the questioners that she focused on the black women of Harris Memorial CME Church *because they need it*. She was also not confident enough in her ministry to assert that the women needed to see themselves in a preacher and needed to have worship encounters which were developed specifically for them in order to be freed to praise and worship in their own way and in order to be liberated and empowered in general.

The writer was hesitant to voice that the women needed to hear sermons that were liberating and empowering versus oppressive, demoralizing, rejecting, or neglectful. Moreover, she was not ready to verbalize that the women needed to attend worship experiences in which God and the Holy Spirit were not erroneously assigned the male gender, but instead were presented as a Spirit or as God, without a gender designation. By the time the writer wrote her final document, she was confident that her decision to focus primarily on the women of Harris Memorial CME Church was consistent with the women's needs and the writer's needs as a doctor of ministry student and as an advocate for women in general and black women in particular.

Since the inception of the current doctor of ministry project, the writer has heard about the importance of praise and worship across various mediums (i.e., internet, social networks, television, radio) and at several meetings within the sixth Episcopal district of the CME Church. In fact, the theme of the quadrennial annual conference of the sixth Episcopal district of the CME Church in July of 2012 was *Experiencing God*. Thus, the writer has received validation from the Holy Spirit and like-minded Christians that praise and worship experiences are of import in the life of the Church and in the life of Christians.

Writer's Insights And Growth

Seminary Education

The writer's journey into seminary was different than her educational and professional development in the field of clinical psychology. As stated previously, the writer decided that she wanted to be a psychologist at age seventeen because she

perceived that it was her Christian duty to help the children of God who were abandoned or misunderstood by Church or society. Since the writer was convicted in her decision to become a clinical psychologist, she was never conflicted about whether or not she wanted to complete the educational or training requirements to become a psychologist or to earn and maintain her license as a psychologist.

Although the writer was interested in learning more about God and ministry, she had not planned on returning to school until she had advanced in the field of clinical psychology and had retired from the field. She was undecided about whether or not a doctor of ministry degree would be beneficial to her ministry career and whether or not she wanted to be a pastor. The writer was therefore ambivalent about whether or not she wanted to pursue ordained ministry during her time at UTS.

The writer's misperception that she was inappropriate for the doctor of ministry program due to her limited ministry experience and the fact that she was not ordained and did not have a master of divinity degree contributed to her ambivalence and low sense of self-competence in the program. The writer fortunately worked through her internal conflict about her role in ministry and her perception that she did not belong in the program. The writer is uncertain if her doctor of ministry degree will lead to additional ministry opportunities. However, she believes that God led her to the doctor of ministry program.

The Writer's Spirit

And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight.¹

The writer has been an introvert during much of her life. Thus, she has quieted her inner passion, knowledge, views, and insights. The writer has a humble and loving spirit. Therefore, she is open to learning and is able to minister to persons of different persuasions. Since the writer has a perfectionist spirit, she is thorough and occasionally self-critical.

Though the writer is resistant to conformity and conservative views or behaviors, she has adapted and conformed to various environments in the fields of psychology and ministry in order to maintain professionalism. She has also quieted her authentic self in order to belong and to advance in her fields. With regards to ministry, the writer thought that she had to be conservative in order to be a minister. The writer also misperceived that she had to let go of her black feminist theoretical orientation and worldview (prior to learning about womanist theology) to increase the kingdom/queendom of God.

A Woman Liberated And Empowered

When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.²

The writer has evolved during her time in the doctor of ministry program at UTS. When she began the doctor of ministry program, she was the woman with the bent down

¹Lk 13:11.

²Lk 13:13–14.

back. She had been disempowered in the past and was unfulfilled and confused about her role in ministry.

The writer endured financial instability throughout her time in the doctor of ministry program at UTS. Although she experienced frustration during episodes of financial hardship, she never stayed weary. Her faith in God, obedience to God, and relationship with the Holy Trinity enabled her to make financial sacrifices and kept her in the doctor of ministry program at UTS.

The writer has begun the process of becoming fully integrated through introspection, prayer, soul pour experiences, reading relevant materials, and writing her doctor of ministry document. She has also become more authentic and unapologetic across situations since she matriculated into the doctor of ministry program at UTS. She has also begun to allow her passion for the Holy Trinity, ministry, and life, and her excitement about liberating and empowering others to flow through her.

The writer entered the doctor of ministry program as an ambivalent and naive licensed minister and seminarian. However, she will graduate from the doctor of ministry program as a confident ordained minister in the CME denomination and a competent doctor of the church in the areas of womanist theology, womanist worship, praise, and worship.

APPENDIX A
CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

I, _____ give my consent to participate in the *Empowered Women of Praise Ministry* which includes a 5-day journal, a 4-hour workshop, and 3 worship/revival services. I understand that the *Empowered Women of Praise Ministry* is a ministry specifically developed for black women to empower them, educate them about praise and worship, and encourage them to praise and worship freely (without being concerned about how others view them while they are engaged in praise or worship during corporate worship/praise). I am aware that the *Empowered Women of Praise Ministry* was developed by Candace D. Allen-Staton, PsyD as part of the requirements for the Doctor of Ministry degree at the United Theological Seminary. Thus, I understand that my participation in this ministry will result in research that will be utilized by Candace D. Allen-Staton, PsyD to complete her Doctor of Ministry project/dissertation. I am aware that the information gathered during this ministry may be published by Candace D. Allen-Staton, PsyD. for ministry purposes. I am aware that my written answers to questions will be anonymous as my name will not be written on any material that I complete during the ministry. To ensure that all information will be kept anonymous, I will be assigned a number that I will use in answering all questions. I will not be asked to write my name on any paperwork for this ministry beyond the prayer book which is described below.

I will be encouraged to write in a private 5 day journal that will remain my property during and following the ministry. I am aware that a prayer book will be developed by all of the participants of the ministry. I understand that I may chose to use my actual name, a pen name that I develop, or to write Anonymous in place of a name attached to the prayer that I decide to submit for the prayer book. Thus, I, _____ agree that the prayer that I submit for the prayer book may be included in the prayer book and given to all participants and possibly used at future ministries/events at Harris Memorial CME Church as determined by Harris Memorial CME Church.

I am aware that I will be encouraged to actively participate in the workshop and worship services and to record any reflections that I may have in my personal folder of information or on the worship agenda which will be handed out prior to each worship service. I am aware that I may be encouraged to invite other women to the worship/revival services that will be held at Harris Memorial CME Church. However, I understand that I am not required to invite other women to the worship/revival services as part of my participation. I am aware that I may take breaks as needed or terminate my participation during the ministry without any negative consequences.

I have read this consent form and agree to participate in the *Empowered Women of Praise Ministry*.

Name of Participant

Date

Witness

Date

APPENDIX B
DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

1. Have you been a member of denominations other than the CME Church? Yes or No.
If so, what denominations were you a member of?

2. How long have you been a member of the CME denomination?

3. How long have you been a member of Harris Memorial CME Church?

4. Are you on any Boards or involved in any ministries at Harris Memorial CME Church? Yes or No. If yes, please list or describe.

5. If not, are you interested in joining a Board or Ministry? Yes or No. If not, why not?

If the board or ministry that you are interested in does not currently exist, what Board or Ministry would you like to start? Please describe.

6. What is your occupation? If retired, please write retired and state what your occupation used to be.

7. How old are you? Please Circle.

18-24 35-50 65 and above
25-34 50-65

APPENDIX C
SOUL POUR JOURNAL

SOUL

POUR

Directions:

Please read this journal at a time of the day (i.e., first thing in the morning, afternoon break, evening break, prior to going to bed) in which you believe that you would be most focused and would most likely be free from external distractions (i.e., children, grandchildren, spouses, friends).

Please read this journal privately. If possible, create your own atmosphere/sanctuary. If possible, please read this journal in a room by yourself without any noise (i.e., talking, television, telephone, music unless it is soft music and not distracting). If possible, please read this journal in an area of your house or apartment, which you perceive to be the most peaceful. If possible, please be dressed comfortably and sit or lie in a comfortable position while completing this journal.

Please allow at-least fifteen minutes to complete each journal entry. If it takes longer to complete, please allow yourself that time.

Please only do one journal entry per day.

All scriptures utilized in this journal are based on the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible.

DAY 1

¹² As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³ Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. ¹⁴ So Eli said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine." ¹⁵ But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. ¹⁶ Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time." (1 Samuel 1:12 -16) {For background scripture, please refer to 1 Samuel 1:1-11}

Please Write Your Initial Reactions

Please underline or highlight the verse(s) that you most relate to. What meaning did you get from those verse(s)?

Reflect on a time in which you felt disturbed or bothered in your soul and you went before the Lord (even if it is now).

Say and/or write a prayer to the Lord based on the above scripture.

DAY 2

²⁵ My soul clings to the dust; revive me according to your word. ²⁶ When I told of my ways, you answered me; teach me your statutes. ²⁷ Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works. ²⁸ My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word. ²⁹ Put false ways far from me; and graciously teach me your law. ³⁰ I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your ordinances before me. ³¹ I cling to your decrees, O LORD; let me not be put to shame. ³² I run the way of your commandments, for you enlarge my understanding. (Psalm 119:25–32)

Please Write Your Initial Reactions

Please underline or highlight the verse(s) that you most relate to. What meaning did you get from those verse(s)?

Reflect on a time in which you needed the Lord to revive you (even if it is now).

Say and/or write a prayer to the Lord based on the above scripture.

DAY 3

⁴ I sought the LORD, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. ⁵ Look to him, and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed. ⁶ This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD, and was saved from every trouble. ⁷ The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. ⁸ O taste and see that the LORD is good; happy are those who take refuge in him. ⁹ O fear the LORD, you his holy ones, for those who fear him have no want. ¹⁰ The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. (Psalm 34:4–10)

Please Write Your Initial Reactions

Please underline or highlight the verse(s) that you most relate to. What meaning did you get from those verse(s)?

Reflect on a time in which you sought the Lord for deliverance from fear, emotional distress, or problems (even if it is now).

Say and/or write a prayer to the Lord based on the above scripture.

DAY 4

¹¹ You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, ¹² so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever.
(Psalm 30:11–12)

Please Write Your Initial Reactions

Please underline or highlight the verse(s) that you most relate to. What meaning did you get from those verse(s)?

Reflect on a time in which believed that the Lord freed or liberated you from sadness or distress (even if it is now).

Say and/or write a prayer to the Lord based on the above scripture.

DAY 5

¹ I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise; ² I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above everything.³ On the day I called, you answered me; you increased my strength of soul. (Psalm 138:1–3)

Please Write Your Initial Reactions

Please underline or highlight the verse(s) that you most relate to. What meaning did you get from those verse(s)?

Reflect on a time in which you confidently praised and worshipped the Lord with your whole heart (even if it is now).

Say and/or write a prayer to the Lord based on the above scripture.

APPENDIX D
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What prompts you to praise?
2. What hinders you from praising?
3. Does being a black woman impact the way that you praise? If so, how? If not, why not?
4. Does being a member of the CME denomination impact the way that you praise? If so, how? If not, why not?

APPENDIX E
YES/NO QUESTIONNAIRE

YES/NO QUESTIONNAIRE

PLEASE WRITE ASSIGNED NUMBER: _____

1. Have you ever felt judged by others at church by the way that you praise or worship?

Yes or No

2. Have you ever felt self-conscious (or anxious or uncomfortable) while praising and worshipping during weekly worship services or other church ministries?

Yes or No

3. Have you ever felt the Holy Spirit upon you?

Yes or No

4. Do you feel a praise (or feel like praising) when you hear music?

Yes or No

5. Do you feel a praise (or feel like you want to praise) when a prayer is being prayed out loud?

Yes or No

6. Do you feel a praise (or feel like you want to praise) when a scripture is read?

Yes or No

7. Do you feel a praise (or feel like you want to praise) when a sermon is being preached?

Yes or No

8. Do you pray with others in addition to weekly worship services?

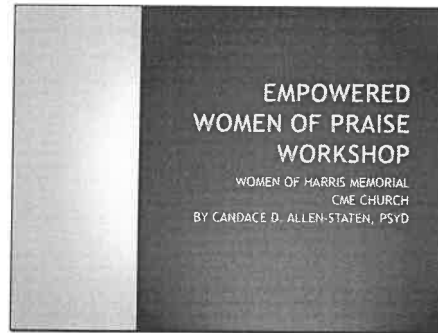
Yes or No

9. Do you pray for others in addition to weekly worship services?

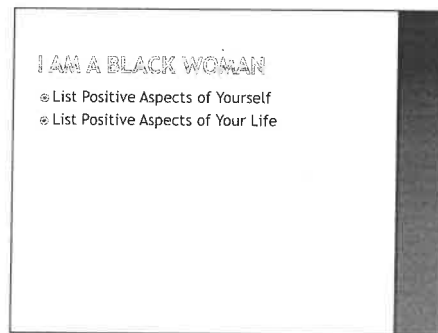
Yes or No

APPENDIX F
EMPOWERED WOMEN OF PRAISE WORKSHOP

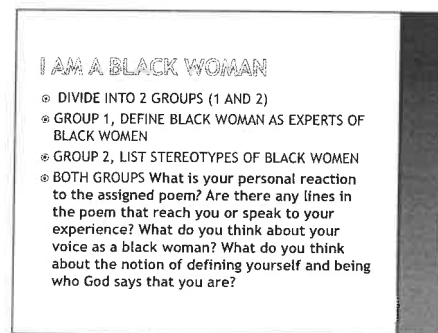
Slide 1



Slide 2



Slide 3



Slide 7

BLACK WOMEN

- Increasing voice in black women increases their sense of advocacy, activism, and community
- Women were created in the image of God (*So God created humankind in God's image, ... male and female God created them...God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good. Genesis 1:27, 31*)
- It is important that black women know themselves and listen to their inner voice
- Black women do not have to conform (Hunter, 1993)

Slide 8

PRAISE/COMMUNITY BIBLE STUDY

Exodus 15:19-21 (NRSV)

¹⁹When the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his chariot drivers went into the sea, the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them; but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground.

The Song of Miriam
(Num 26:59)

²⁰Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. ²¹And Miriam sang to them:

"Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea."

Slide 9

WHAT IS PRAISE?

...

Slide 10

HOW CAN ONE PRAISE?

- ...

This slide features a white background with a dark vertical bar on the right side. The title 'HOW CAN ONE PRAISE?' is centered at the top in a bold, sans-serif font. Below the title, there is a single bullet point consisting of a small circle followed by three dots.

Slide 11

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF PRAISE?

- To invoke God's presence
- To have an intimate relationship with God
- To please God
- To Give Thanksgiving To God

This slide features a white background with a dark vertical bar on the right side. The title 'WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF PRAISE?' is centered at the top in a bold, sans-serif font. Below the title, there is a list of four bullet points, each starting with a small circle followed by a space and then the text.

Slide 12

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PRAISE?

- Blessings increase (Miles, 2000)
- One becomes more open to sharing their experiences of God to others
- Persons are less concerned about themselves when they are focused on God's will and on serving other people
- Consistent praise may result in increasing one's ability to discern quicker and at a deeper level

(Ford & Hardy, 2005)

This slide features a white background with a dark vertical bar on the right side. The title 'WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PRAISE?' is centered at the top in a bold, sans-serif font. Below the title, there is a list of four bullet points, each starting with a small circle followed by a space and then the text. At the bottom of the slide, there is a citation in parentheses.

Slide 13

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PRAISE?

- Consistent praise often results in an increase in one's faith (Ford & Hardy, 2005)
- Praise defeats depression and defeat. (Ford & Hardy, 2005)
- Praises refocuses one's thoughts and feelings
- Praise reinforces the truth of who one is and who God is.
- Praise improves relationships
- Praise increases spiritual sensitivity or awareness of God (Youseff, 2006)

Slide 14

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT PRAISE

- One's praise can be potentially shaped by their experiences of witnessing others praise (Ford & Hardy, 2005)
- The intensity of one's praise may be related to one's belief that God can solve all of their problems. (Youseff, 2006)

Slide 15

BENEFITS OF PRAISE

- Speaking positively about God and your situations leads to positive situations.
- Praise motivates others to praise (Youseff, 2006)

Slide 16

PRAYER

Lord, God
 Dancer of the Universe,
 Show me how to dance.
 Take my hand and give me a twirl.
 Spin me around until I collapse in your arms.
 Teach me a step until I get it right.
 Lead me to where I'm not inclined to go on my own.
 Toss me in the air until I squeal with delight
 And can see further than I have ever seen before
 Make me dance with you
 Until I don't recognize my new Self
 And I am breathless with joy.
 Renita Weems (2002)

Slide 17

WHAT IS PRAYER

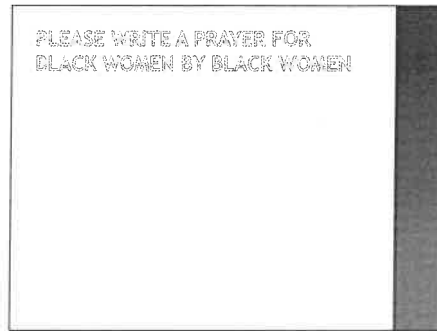
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Slide 18

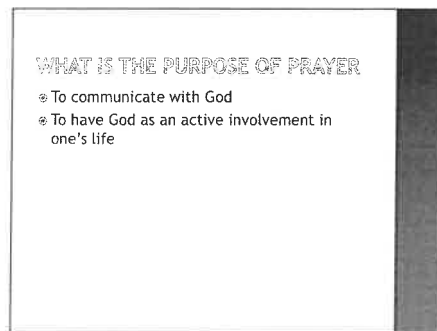
TYPES OF PRAYER

- ⊗ Adoration and thanksgiving: forms of prayer in which one adores God for who God is and for what God has done.
- ⊗ Penitence: form of prayer in which one views sin as anything that prevents the person from praising God.
- ⊗ Confessions: form of prayer in which one confesses one's sin.
- ⊗ An intercession prayer occurs when one prays for another that which they have discerned that the other needs from God.
- ⊗ Petition/Lament: forms of prayer in which one asks God to meet their needs. (Ford & Hardy, 2005)

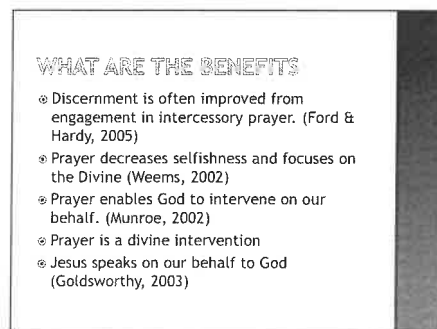
Slide 19



Slide 20



Slide 21



Slide 22

TESTIMONY

It took a little while,
 Putting down roots here, only to rip them up later on,
 Trying to spot in this garden and then another,
 Too long in the sun here,
 Overshadowed by others over there.
 Finally I found my spot,
 It was not too late for me.
 The Master Gardner plucked me up and put me
 Where I could get
 Just enough water, just enough sun.
 Now watch me bloom.
 Just because I'm scared today doesn't mean that I'll
 Be
 Scared tomorrow.
 You should have seen me yesterday.
 Before God replanted me.
 Renita Weems (2002)

Slide 23

PRAYER AND FASTING

- ⊗ Is Sometimes done as a group/congregation
- ⊗ Is an act of faith/wills
- ⊗ Is based on obedience to God
- ⊗ Is intentional
- ⊗ Is done in order to seek God
- ⊗ Helps one to become more spiritual
- ⊗ Helps one to become more disciplined
- ⊗ Helps the Spirit become stronger
- ⊗ Grows ministries
- ⊗ Prompts deliverance

Munroe (2002)

Slide 24

WHAT IS A TESTIMONY

- ⊗ It began during slavery and has been popularized in the black Church
- ⊗ It verbalizes one's transformation, sanctification, or deliverance in front of others
- ⊗ It is a proclamation over adversities
- ⊗ Everyone can give a testimony
- ⊗ It can be given through voice, song, instrument, dance, etc...

(Pinn, 2002)

Slide 25

WHAT IS TESTIMONY

- It can be a form of protest or lament for black women (Townsend Gilkes, 2001)

Slide 26

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF TESTIMONY

- It transforms a group of people (congregation; women) into a community
- It prompts social change
- It decreases psychological distress (Townsend Gilkes, 2001)

Slide 27

TESTIMONY TIME!

Slide 28

WORSHIP

It took a little while,
 Putting down roots here, only to rip them up later on,
 Trying to spot in this garden and then another,
 Too long in the sun here,
 Overshadowed by others over there.
 Finally I found my spot,
 It was not too late for me,
 The Master Gardener plucked me up and put me
 Where I could get
 Just enough water, just enough sun.
 Now watch me bloom.
 Just because I'm scared today doesn't mean that I'll
 Be
 Scared tomorrow.
 You should have seen me yesterday.
 Before God replanted me.
 Renita Weems (2002)

Slide 29

COMMUNITY BIBLE STUDY

• John 4:4-13 (NRSV)

⁴But he had to go through Samaria. ⁵So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

⁷A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." ¹¹The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,

Slide 30

COMMUNITY BIBLE STUDY

John 4:14-26 (NRSV)

¹⁴but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." ¹⁵The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." ¹⁷The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" ¹⁹The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." ²¹Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." ²⁶Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

Slide 31

COMMUNITY BIBLE STUDY

John 4:27-29 (NRSV)

²⁷ Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?"

²⁸ Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people,

²⁹ "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?"

Slide 32

COMMUNITY BIBLE STUDY

John 4:39-42 (NRSV)

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done."⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

Slide 33

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

Slide 34

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF WORSHIP

- To demonstrate what is expected from a Christian lifestyle
- To recall the salvation given to us by God in Christ and to praise and thank God for salvation

(Thomas & Wondra, 2002)

- God forgives sins through worship (Schnase, 2007)

Slide 35

HOW DOES ONE WORSHIP?

- The disposition for worship is humility, repentance, thanksgiving, and joy. (Vickers, 2011)
- Love God with entire being (Schnase, 2007)

Slide 36

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF WORSHIP

- Worship equips and encourages people and calls them to become more Christ-like
- Worship breathes life into the church, forms identity, and provides a place of learning about faith and listening to God.

(Schnase, 2007)

Positive Aspects of Your Self

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Positive Aspects of Your Life

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Aspects of Your Life For Which You Seek Deliverance:**1.****2.****3.****4.****5.**

SOUL POUR PRAYER BOOK

PLEASE TURN IN WHEN COMPLETE

PLEASE WRITE A POEM FOR BLACK WOMEN BELOW:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

SIGNED: _____

**(PLEASE SIGN FIRST AND LAST NAME; FIRST NAME ONLY;
ANONYMOUS, OR A PIN NAME)**

WORKSHOP PRE-TEST/POST-TEST

PLEASE WRITE YOUR ASSIGNED NUMBER: _____

Please answer the following questions. (Please do not over think the questions. We will be learning more about the questions below in the workshop.)

1. Do you feel free to praise or worship in your own way? **Yes or No**
2. Are you comfortable with expressing or showing your emotions during weekly worship services or other church ministries? **Yes or No**

3. What is praise?

4. What is the purpose of praise?

5. What are the benefits of praise?

6. What is worship?

7. What is the purpose of worship?

8. What are the benefits of worship?

9. What is a testimony?

10. What is the purpose of a testimony?

11. How would you describe black women's roles in praise and worship?

APPENDIX G

EMPOWERED WOMEN OF PRAISE POEMS

Create in me, O Lord, a new picture of myself.
Hold up the mirror that reflects back to me the God
within me,
the good in me, the whole in me, the love in me, the
laughter in me,
the power within me.
Let me see me, so I can be the me you created
me to be.
Renew my self-image.
Show me reflections that say,
I am not helpless. I am not weak. I am not powerless.
I am not a victim.
I am no longer asleep,
I am fully conscious.
And now that I am awake
I've got plans for me.¹

¹Renita J. Weems, *Showing Mary: How Women Can Share Prayers, Wisdom, And The Blessings Of God* (New York, NY: Warner Books, Inc., 2002), 116.

for donna

fear;

& i can't loosen my own brown hands
wrapped round my own brown throat
this feeling of being born/living
with the cord tightening on my neck

i

can't

breathe most times

i can't breathe

it's real;

i am a blkwoman

this is america

i live outside my own life

in an internal state of war

dreaming of what it would be like

2 be

at peace

this legacy of silence;

when we met i had no language

no way 2 call 2 you

but you said

you are a blkwoman

this is america

each chance you get 2 speak

might be your last
 but my words have been used against me
 donna
 by those i loved the most
 getting 2 the place where i can at last feel safe
 is the most dangerous journey
 of all
 you were the first person 2 see beyond differences
 & tell me all my words
 were valid
 how will we finally be able 2 focus our blkwoman selves
 on what we need
 2 survive
 ?
 how will we learn 2 support ourselves outside of therapy
 & despair
 ?
 when will we learn 2 move as a whole
 ?
 when will we learn
 2
 speak
 ?²

²bandele, asha. (1999), for donna, *absence in the palms of my hands* (pp. 13-14) (New York, NY: Harlem River Press).

Lord, God
Dancer of the Universe,
Show me how to dance.
Take my hand and give me a twirl.
Spin me around until I collapse in your arms.
Teach me a step until I get it right.
Lead me to where I'm not inclined to go on my own.
Toss me in the air until I squeal with delight
And can see further than I have ever seen before
Make me dance with you
Until I don't recognize my new Self
And I am breathless with joy.³

³Ibid., 194.

It took a little while,
Putting down roots here, only to rip them up later on,
Trying to spot in this garden and then another,
Too long in the sun here,
Overshadowed by others over there.
Finally I found my spot,
It was not too late for me.
The Master Gardner plucked me up and put me
Where I could get
Just enough water, just enough sun.
Now watch me bloom.
Just because I'm scared today doesn't mean that I'll
Be
Scared tomorrow.
You should have seen me yesterday.
Before God replanted me.⁴

⁴Ibid., 157-158.

APPENDIX H
SOUL POUR WOMANIST WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

SOUL POUR REVIVAL EXPERIENCE

Call To Worship/ Invocation

Litany

Leader: Lo, the angels of God proclaim the majestic sweetness that shapes the covenantal relationships, forged for life, between God and humanity for the sake of healthy spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental ways of being open, loving communities.

People: **In the spirit of civility and justice, we commit ourselves to God and the rule of God on earth, where transformation is sure and wickedness in our communities is overcome for the glory of God and the good of humanity.**

Leader: Lo, the angels of God proclaim the faithfulness of God, a faithfulness that endures within our community. We rejoice in God's eternal life and the gift of our spiritual selves, especially as we know sorrow, regret, temptation, and disease.

People: **In the spirit of all that is loving, peaceful, and freeing, we stand in God's presence. In an attitude of praise, we cry out to our holy God: please remember our community at home, at work, and in your sanctuary.**

Leader: Behold the joy and the restorative powers of the Lord, our God who builds our community, who has the loving flexibility to forgive, who weeps with us in our distress, who girds our spirits.

People: **In the spirit of our ancestors' faith and conviction, we pray to let go of things unimportant, and cherish those things and experiences of value; we pray that we may become a community of witnesses to the world, proclaiming what God has done for us.¹**

Scripture: 1 Samuel 1:12-15, NRSV

As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine" But Hannah answered, "No my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord.

Women's Affirmation (Psalm 139:14, NRSV)

I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

Praise and Worship Selections

Open To Christian Discipleship

Altar Call

Offering

Benediction

¹Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, *Soul Pearls: Worship Resources for the Black Church*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 172.

SOUL POUR CONFESSION/HOPE ALTAR CALL

PRAYER OF CONFESSION/ALTAR ALL

Leader: If we claim that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

People: But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Leader: In silence, let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.²

DECLARATION OF HOPE/ALTAR CALL

Do you believe that God is willing to forgive our sins?

We do.

Do you resolve to forgive those who have offended and hurt you?

We do.

Do you resolve to seek the forgiveness of those you have hurt or offended?

We do.

Do you resolve to keep yourself open to the Holy Spirit, so that you may resist what is wrong and do what is good?

We do.³

²Kathleen S. Smith, *Stilling the Storm: Worship and Congregational Leadership in Difficult Times* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006), 156.

³Ibid., 160-161.

SOUL POUR SERMON OUTLINE

I. A Woman In Conflict

- Barren

- Husband Has Other Wife That Has Children; That Provokes Hannah

- Society's Views On Hannah/Hannah's Status

II. A Woman In Distress

- Not Eating Or Drinking

- Wept

Husband Does Not Understand; Thinks His Love Is Enough; His Status Is Uneffected

III. Soul Pour

- Define

- Prayer To God

- Focused On God

- Promise To God

- No More Distress

- God Ultimately Delivers

IV. Praise Misunderstood

- Not Drunk...

- Praise is personal and does not have to be understood by others

V. Celebration/Conclusion

- God Hears Prayers

- God Answers Prayers

- Every Now And Then You Have To Have A Soul Pour Experience...

- A Soul Pour Experience...

SOUL POUR ASSOCIATED POEMS

RELEASE

Ladies
This is
For us
There's no move stressin
Or reactin
I'm just recreatin
Everything
In my experience
That isn't
Fulfillin

I'm no longer willin
to quiet my tone
Cause I represent
Black women
And I gotta let it go
Cause I'm feelin this flow

I'm not focusin on
My foes
Or those
That can't
Comprehend
Or pretend
To know what it means
To be a Black woman
Faced with oppression
From insecure Black men
Privileged White men
And many others in between
I'm focusin
On me
And every Black woman
Sharin
The commonality

Of racial, sexual, and class oppression
In the American society

I need a release
You need a release
We need a release
Black women lets get our release
So that we can let go of that tension
With no more carryin
Of that daily burden

As we come to the realization
That though we as black women
Are forced to embrace the label
Of the strong black woman
We are not invincible
And need relaxation
To get rid of frustration
So I'm gonna throw
Out some ideas in my flow
And maybe you
Can think of more
To take away your sorrow

To release
Black women
You can
Confide in a friend
Put an end
To soul intoxicating relationships
Go on weekend trips
Have a good time
Go to your favorite places to dine
Go ahead and start dancing
With no intention of romancing
Light scented candles
Get pedicures and manicures
Spend time alone
With no interruptions
Get your hair done
Without being on a run
Study the Bible
When not going through a trial
Engage in that misplaced hobby
Instead of trying to be like she or he

Release
Through
Reading,
Writing,
Singing,
Praying,
Exercising,
Crying,
Screaming
Laughing,
Breathing,
And trying something new
But most importantly being you

RELEASE

RELEASE

RELEASE

RELEASE⁴

FORGIVEN

Why do you cry
And ask why
When Jesus weeps for you
And has brought you through?

Why are you suffering
When Jesus has removed your burden
Up on the mountain?

Why aren't you living to your potential
When God has provided you with a special
Gift to share with the world?

God loves you
But unlike woman and man
God is patient
And forgiving

God sees beyond
Your sin
But your focus
Is on the past

Though you are blessed
You can't behold it
Until you let go of the pain

You are beautiful and skillful
Because God is the ultimate artist
Appreciate that ever experience
Is pressing you into fulfilling
Your life's meaning
And molding you into the unique person
That God knew before you were born

But in order for you to evolve
Into the magnificent person
That God adores
You must begin the process of
Surrendering
Yesterday
Which will only be initiated
If you forgive yourself
As God has forgiven you.⁵
Which can only be initiated

⁴Candace Allen-Staten, Release, *Embrace* CD, 2007.

⁵Ibid., Forgiven.

SOUL POUR FEEDBACK

By completing this form, you are giving Dr. Candace D. Allen-Staten permission to utilize your answers as part of her Doctor of Ministry Doctoral Dissertation. This form is optional. If you complete it, please do not write your name anywhere on this form.

1. How do you see yourself in Hannah?

2. Does praise have to be understood by the onlooker? Please circle: **Yes or No**

3. What is the best way to cope with conflict and begin resolving conflict?

4. Briefly, what did you receive from the sermon

5. How would you rate the sermon?

It was greatly applicable to my life and the message was clear to my life	It was somewhat applicable to my life and the message was clear	NEUTRAL	It was slightly applicable to my life and the message was somewhat clear	It was not applicable message was unclear
---	---	----------------	--	---

6. What touched you the most during the revival/worship experience? Please Circle.

Call to Worship	Invocation	Litany	Scripture	Women's Affirmation
Praise and Worship	The Spoken Word			Open To Christian Discipleship
Prayer of Confession/Prayer of Hope	Altar Call	Offering		Benediction

7. How would you rate the overall revival/worship experience? Please Circle.

It was a great It was a good It was a neutral It was a disappointing It was a poor

8. How has the inclusion of spoken word poetry added to the worship experience? Please Circle

It highlighted other areas of the revival/worship experience in a great way	It highlighted other areas of the revival/worship experience in a good way	It neither added nor took away from the revival/worship experience	It slightly took away from the revival/worship experience
---	--	--	---

It greatly took away from the revival/worship experience

APPENDIX I
CONFIDENT WORSHIP WOMANIST WORSHIP EXP.

CONFIDENT WORSHIP REVIVAL EXPERIENCE

Call To Worship/ Invocation

Litany

Leader: We come into God's presence, into the place consecrated for the worship of God, a place made sacred by thousands of prayers and testimonies in the preached and shared words that have gone forth from inside these walls.

People: **We desire to worship in spirit and truth, that we might have a clearer conscious awareness of God and God's plan for our lives.**

Leader: In the most grand or simple vestments and robes, in suits and clean work-a-day clothing, we come to the Mount of Olives and to Mount Zion, our cities high on a hill, as we connect with God.

People: **We desire to be made whole, as God would have us be. Thus, we come to worship, seeking renewal and assurance that God loves us still.**

Leader: With music plain or complex; in English, Spanish, Latin, Swahili, or Greek; with the cultural backgrounds of Asia, Africa, Europe, and South and North Americas, we worship now.

People: **We make a joyful noise unto God, as we sing and shout and, like David, dance, for the Lord is good and God's mercy endures forever.¹**

Scripture But Jesus said, **"Someone touched me; for I noticed that power had gone out from me."** When the woman saw that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling; and falling down, before him, she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. He said to her, **"Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."** (Luke 8:48-48, NRSV)

Women's Affirmation

All: **I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. (Psalm 139:14, NRSV)**

Praise and Worship Selections

The Spoken Word/Sermon

Altar Call

Offering

Benediction

¹Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, *Soul Pearls: Worship Resources for the Black Church*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 53.

CONFIDENT WORSHIP SERMON OUTLINE

I. **Desperation**

- she was tired of bleeding, of being isolated, of being stigmatized
- she had tried everything else
- she had gone from physician to physician and no one could understand her ailment
- she likely felt discouraged or as though she was going to have to continue to suffer
- somehow, she decided to go to the Healer of all Healers
- perhaps in her loneliness she learned about Jesus
- perhaps she knew that Jesus loved women
- perhaps she knew that Jesus performed everyday miracles
- perhaps she knew of Jesus' power
- this was her last hope
- if Jesus could not save her, no one could

II. **Boldness**

- at the risk of being caught, she still sought Jesus
- at the risk of infecting Jesus, she still sought Jesus

III. **No longer invisible**

- Jesus made known that someone touched him
- Jesus demanded that she reveal herself

IV. **From this woman**

- we learn that Jesus is all-powerful
- we learn that Jesus is not bothered by ministry of interruption
- we learn that Jesus will not humiliate us
- we learn that Jesus is not focused on societal rules
- we learn that Jesus does not abuse his power
- we learn that Jesus does not hold back his blessings and miracles
- we learn that Jesus knows our touch
- we learn that we are important to Jesus
- we learn that we can be immediately healed if we go to Jesus
- we learn that it is never too late to be healed

{INSERT PRESENCE POEM}

V. **No longer a woman with issues of blood, but as a Model of Confident Worship**

- she was not ashamed
- she believed in the power of Jesus
- she knew that Jesus was her Savior
- she knew that Jesus was her only Hope
- her faith conquered any doubt that she may have had
- she was humble; she came trembling and falling down before him
- she was faithful; she declared in the presence of all people why she had touched him (not an explanation) and how she was immediately healed

{INSERT WEEMS POEM}

VI. Celebration

- Your faith in Jesus' power can set you free
- There is no expiration for our deliverance
- There is no situation or circumstance that Jesus cannot deliver us from
- When all hope is gone, Jesus is our Hope
- Jesus is not bound by society and religious rules
- Jesus is here, waiting on us to call on him
- Jesus is here, waiting on us to reach out for him
- Jesus is here waiting on us to worship him

CONFIDENT WORSHIP POEMS

UNTITLED

I usedta bow,
now I stand
before God's throne.

I usedta close my eyes,
now I stare
straight ahead.

I usedta do what was expected
now I do what I must
to make this faith
faithful to me.

I usedta be afraid of God
now I take my chances
and wait
and wait
tapping my feet,
listening for God.²

PRESENCE

I'm running after You
I need You
I'm tired of going through
And I know that You
are the only One
that can bring me through

I yearn for You
I seek You
in all that I do
For I know
that You shall make me whole

You
are the solution
to every concern
that's weighing me down
and every problem
that's got me bound

I know that if I can only
get in Your presence
I can receive peace

If only
I can get in Your presence
I can
see in an instant
how I shall be
and who I shall be
through Your glory

Your compassion
and unconditional love for me
is overwhelming
there is no other
who completely understands me
and only wants the best for me

You don't want to change me
like Church, family, community, and society
instead, You want me to be
the Woman of God You created me to be

I know that in Your presence
I shall become confident
in who I am
And in whose I am

I rejoice that I no longer
have to seek acceptance
from women and men

I no longer have to conform
to others' opinion
of me
I only have to
conform
to You

I place all of my trust
in You
I know that You
will deliver me from
Doubt and Regret
Low Self-Esteem and
Low Self-Confidence,
Confusion and Depression
Shame and Blame,

Anxiety, Animosity, and Jealousy

My faith
reveals to me
that You will liberate me
from the unhealthy cycles
that have prevented me
from being faultless before thee
and being free in You as I ought
to be

I need Your
Holy Spirit
POWER
so that I can
go and proclaim
Your goodness
in spite of
circumstances

Jesus,
I know you as my
Healer,
Deliverer,
Comforter,
and Savior

You have saved
me from sin and
the enemy
so that I no longer
have to go from
cycle to cycle

Since I called
on Your name
every unhealthy
cycle has been broken

Since I called
on Your name
I stopped being
ashamed and distracted

In Your presence
I am loved and accepted

In your presence
I am free and complete.³

² Renita Weems, *Listening for God: A Minister's Journey Through Silence And Doubt*, (New York: NY, Simon & Schuster, 1999) 35.

³ Candace D. Allen-Staton, *Presence*, 2011.

Confident Worship Feedback

By completing this form, you are giving Dr. Candace D. Allen-Staten permission to utilize your answers as part of her Doctor of Ministry Doctoral Dissertation. This form is optional. If you complete it, please do not write your name anywhere on this form.

1. How do you see yourself in the woman with issues of blood?

2. What is *confident worship*?

3. Briefly, what did you receive from the Spoken Word/Sermon?

4. How would you rate the Spoken Word/Sermon?

It was greatly applicable to my life and the message was clear	It was somewhat applicable to my life and the message was somewhat clear	NEUTRAL	It was slightly applicable to my life and the message was slightly clear	It was not applicable to my life and the message was unclear
--	--	---------	--	--

5. What touched you the most during the revival/worship experience? Please Circle.

Call to Worship	Invocation	Litany	Scripture	Women's Affirmation
Praise and Worship Selections	The Spoken Word/Sermon			Open To Christian Discipleship
Altar Call Offering	Benediction			

6. How would you rate the overall revival/worship service? Please Circle.

It was a great worship experience	It was a good worship experience	It was a neutral worship experience	It was a disappointing worship experience	It was a poor worship experience
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7. How has inclusion of spoken word poetry added to the worship experience? Please Circle.

It was relevant and greatly added to the revival/worship experience	It was somewhat relevant and to the revival/worship experience	It neither added nor took away from the revival worship experience	It was slightly relevant and did not add to the revival/worship experience	It was irrelevant and took away from the revival/worship experience
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APPENDIX J
LIBERATING OUR SPIRIT WOMANIST WORSHIP EXP.

Liberating Our Spirit Revival Experience

Call To Worship

Litany

Leader: Out of the unconsciousness of our collective beings; we celebrate the vitality of community, of self-worth, of life, of being.

People: **Aware of God's salvation and our destruction of self and those deemed other, we honor the sacred within.**

Leader: We focus not on ignorance and woundedness, not on fear and vengeance, but on the beauty and possibility of transformation within us all.

People: **Because God is still God and is still our God, we are whom God created us to be; we can live out our lives valuing our worth, being true to ourselves and true to you, divine One, without apology.**

Leader: Shaped by intimate, healthy relationships with God, we begin to see and know and learn differently. We learn to like and love ourselves, seeing our illuminated beauty.

People: **As our love for self grows, we are able to see fully who we are and whose we are; we belong to God, and God endows us with self-worth.¹**

Scripture

When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. (Luke 10:12-13, NRSV)

Women's Affirmation

All: **I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. (Psalm 139:14, NRSV)**

Praise Dance/Praise and Worship Selections

The Spoken Word/Sermon

Open To Christian Discipleship

Testimonies

Leader: Life is a gift! As we tell the stories of our lives, giving testimony of what God has done for us, we help others become open to celebrating their own lives from a gift perspective.

People: **Sharing testimonies acknowledges God's presence and gives life new meaning That God gives us life and empowers us and shows us favor is a living, covenantal testimony.²**

Altar Call

Offering

Benediction

¹ Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, *Soul Pearls: Worship Resources for the Black Church*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 169.

² Ibid., 175.

OUR TESTIMONY

This is our testimony
 This is our story
 Of all that God has
 Done for us

In our darkest hours
 We have called out
 Jesus, Jesus, Jesus
 In times of despair
 We know that God was there

We know that our prayer
 Is not in vain
 For God has answered
 Us when we have believed

God, we have heard from You
 We know that when
 We have been obedient
 To You-
 You have brought us through

God has spared
 Us from
 fire, ailments, loneliness, and destruction

God has been
 Our sustenance
 When we experienced financial hardship

Jesus
 Is our fulfillment
 When we wonder if we have a purpose

Day by Day
 We know that Jesus
 Is delivering us
 From illness
 And emotional distress

In the midst
 Of grief
 God has been
 Our relief

In times of isolation
 Our relationship
 With Jesus has grown

We have learned that if we
 Simplify our lives
 We will have more time to do God's will in our lives

God has
 Blessed u
 With family
 And children and grandchildren
 That we love

We know
 That God
 Made us beautifully
 And uniquely
 And that God
 Loves us inside-out

We are not simply a congregation
 We have concern
 For one another
 We are a community
 Of sister
 Praising
 And worshipping
 Our God
 Through it all

God's unconditional love
 For us
 Has brought us
 Thus far
 And shall
 Continue to keep us³

³Candace D. Allen-Staten, *Our Testimony Poem*, 2011

LIBERATING OUR SPIRIT ASSOCIATED POEMS

UNTITLED

O Lord, even though I cannot see my way,
 still I hear your voice calling me in the whirlwind.
 Things are falling apart and coming together
 at the same time.
 Fear and calm over take me.
 Feeling of unworthiness and divine boldness
 vacillate within.
 But I hear you beckoning me, telling me to get up,
 Reach out, look up, step out.
 I hear and I obey.⁴

UNTITLED

I am a woman now, no longer a girl.
 A daughter and at the same time a woman.
 I have learned to speak up and speak out,
 And to let my voice be heard in the forest.
 It is time for me to take my place in the circle
 of womanhood,
 And claim my title as survivor, warrior, grown one,
 Eagle, mother earth.
 I am entitled to the gray hair on my head.
 I have earned the bags under my eyes.
 I have won the right to the scar across my belly.
 I have been to Hell and back, and God accompanied
 Me throughout my journey.
 My days of being a sweet young thing are over.
 I prefer being woman.⁷

STILL I RISE

You may write me down in history
 With your bitter, twisted lies,
 You may trod me in the very dirt
 But still, like dust, I'll rise.
 Does my sassiness upset you?
 Why are you beset with gloom?
 'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
 Pumping in my own living room.
 Just like moons and like suns,
 With the certainty of tides,
 Just like hopes springing high,
 Still I rise.
 Did you want to see me broken?
 Bowed head and lowered eyes?
 Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
 Weakened by my soulful cries.
 Does my haughtiness offend you?
 Don't you take it awful hard
 'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines

Diggin' in my own back yard
 You may shoot me with your words,
 You may kill me with your hatefulness
 But still like air, I'll rise
 Does my sexiness upset you?
 Does it come as a surprise
 That I dance like I've got diamonds
 At the meeting of my thighs?
 Out of the huts of history's shame
 I rise
 Up from a past that's rooted in pain
 I rise
 I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
 Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
 Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
 I rise
 Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
 I rise
 Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
 I am the dream and hope of the slave.
 I rise
 I rise
 I rise.⁶

LIBERATED WOMAN

Jesus, I come to worship You
 in spite of it all
 I've been bent down
 for too long
 this negative spirit is having a toll on me
 I need You to free me
 But, I feel so unworthy
 I've been hurt by society, Church, community, and family
 Please remove this spirit from me
 My self-confidence is low
 and so
 is my self-esteem
 I've been so overly concerned
 about what others think of me
 that I have lost me
 Lord, I don't want to be in distress
 For I know I am still blessed
 I come to You
 so that I can
 STAND
 STRAIGHT UP
 WITH MY HEAD UP

so that I can be
 the woman
 You are calling
 me to be
 A Woman-
 Confident
 A Woman
 With High Esteem
 A Woman
 With The Holy Spirit
 Within
 A Woman
 Guided by the Lord
 A Woman
 In Constant
 Praise and Worship
 of the Lord
 A Woman
 Liberated.⁵

⁴ Renita Weems, *Showing Mary: How Women Can Share Prayers, Wisdom, And The Blessings Of God*, (West Bloomfield, MI: Warner Books, 2002), 14.

⁵ Candace D. Allen-Staton, *Liberated Woman*, 2011.

⁶ Maya Angelou, Still I Rise. In *Phenomenal Woman: four poems celebrating women*. (New York: NY, Random House, 1994), 7-10.

⁷ Renita Weems, *Showing Mary: How Women Can Share Prayers, Wisdom, And The Blessings Of God*, (West Bloomfield, MI: Warner Books, 2002), 130.

Liberating Our Spirit Feedback

1. How do you see yourself in the woman with the spirit?

2. How can you rid yourself of any negative spirits or thoughts or emotional distress (i.e., sadness, anxiety, unresolved anger confusion, self-doubt) or low self-esteem or low self-confidence?

3. Briefly, what did you receive from the Spoken Word/Sermon?

4. How would you rate the Spoken Word/Sermon?

It was greatly applicable to my life and the message	It was somewhat applicable to my life and the message	NEUTRAL	It was slightly applicable to my life and the message	It was not applicable to my life and the message
---	--	----------------	--	---

5. What touched you the most during the revival/worship experience? Please Circle.

Call to Worship	Invocation	Initial Litany	Scripture	Women's Affirmation
Praise Dance	Praise and Worship Selections	The Spoken Word/Sermon	Open To Christian Discipleship	
Testimony (Litany and Testimony)	Our Testimony Poem	Altar Call	Offering	

6. How would you rate the overall revival/worship service? Please Circle.

It was great worship experience	It was a good worship experience	It was a neutral worship experience	It was a disappointing worship experience	It was a poor worship experience
--	---	--	--	---

7. How has the inclusion of spoken word poetry added to the worship experience? Please Circle.

It was a relevant and greatly added to the revival/ worship experience	It was somewhat relevant and to the revival/ worship experience	It neither added nor took away from the revival worship experience	It was slightly relevant and did not add to the revival/worship experience	It was irrelevant and took away from the revival/ worship experience
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APPENDIX K
OVERALL RATINGS

OVERALL RATINGS

1. Overall, how would you rate your journaling experience with the Soul Pour Journal? **Please Circle:**

The journal greatly assisted me with reflecting on my life and God's role/presence in my life	The journal somewhat assisted me with reflecting on my life and God's role/presence in my life	NEUTRAL	The journal slightly assisted me with reflecting on my life and God's role/presence in my life	The journal didn't assist me with reflecting on my life and God's role/presence in my life
---	--	---------	--	--

2. Prior to writing in the Soul Pour Journal, did you journal regularly? **Please Circle: Yes or No**

3. Did the journal prepare you for the worship in terms of increasing your personal praise/worship to God? **Please Circle: Yes or No**

4. Did the journal prepare you for the revival services in terms of increasing your personal praise/worship to God? **Please Circle: Yes or No**

5. After writing in the Soul Pour Journal, how likely are you to continue journaling on your own. **Please Circle:**

I am very likely to begin/resume writing in a journal	I am somewhat likely to begin/resume writing in a journal	I'm Undecided	I am somewhat unlikely to begin/resume writing in a journal	I am very unlikely to begin/resume writing in a journal
---	---	---------------	---	---

6. Overall, how would you rate the Empowered Women of Praise Workshop?

It was very empowering/experiential/informative	It was moderately empowering/experiential/informative	It was somewhat empowering/experiential/informative	It was slightly empowering/experiential/informative	It wasn't empowering/experiential/informative
---	---	---	---	---

7. Overall, how would you say that the use of poetry assisted you in discussing or learning about topics, such as prayer, black women's identity and stereotypes, and testimony. **Please Circle:**

It greatly added to discussion/learning	It moderately added to discussion/learning	It somewhat added to discussion/learning	It slightly added to discussion/learning	It didn't add to discussion/learning
---	--	--	--	--------------------------------------

8. After participating in the Empowered Women of Praise Workshop, how likely are you to continue to meet with the women of your congregation to learn about specific subjects as well as to womanship (fellowship) with one another. **Please Circle:**

Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	I'm Undecided	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely
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9. After participating in the revival services, how likely are you to participate in future women's worship services or revival services? **Please Circle:**

Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	I'm Undecided	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely
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10. How would you rate your confidence in terms of praising and worshipping overtly (visibly to others) and freely during weekly worship services. **Please Circle:**

Not At All Confident	Somewhat Confident	Moderate Confident	Very Confident
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APPENDIX L
SOUL POUR PRAYER BOOK

SOUL POUR PRAYER BOOK

Written by the Women of Harris Memorial Christian Methodist
Episcopal Church in Dayton, Ohio in December of 2011.

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SOUL POUR PRAYER BOOK

As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, “How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine.” But Hannah answered, “No my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunken neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord. (1 Samuel 1:12-15 New Revised Standard Version)

Lord, God, I thank you for grace and mercy and for the unconditional love that you have shown us. I praise you for who you are. I laud and magnify you for what you have done in our lives and for what you are going to do in our lives. I thank you that you are ever-present in our lives. I thank you for bringing us through Yesterday. I thank you for the manifold gifts that you have bestowed upon us. I pray that we will use our gifts to increase the kingdom/queendom of God.

Lord, you are an awesome God and you are worthy of all of our praise. Please help us to continuously praise and worship you in Spirit and in Truth and to seek you in our everyday lives.

Lord, please continue to grow us in your Word so that we may be in your will. Lord, please help us to forgive one another for personal injuries. Please help us to love each other unconditionally as you love us. Lord, please build up this part of the Body of Christ. As black women, we represent the majority of the Black Church. Therefore, our ministry is important to the life of the church. Please help us to continue to birth ministries at Harris Memorial CME Church. Please help us to share the love of God to black men and children and to all of God's children. Lord, please heal us from all past pain. Please mold us into the beautiful black women that you made us to be. Please continue to lead and guide us along the way. Please deliver us from anything that is preventing us from doing your perfect will. Please liberate us from low self-esteem, low self-confidence, and oppression. Please empower us to be all that you have called us to be. Please empower us to be bold women before the throne of God, eager to proclaim that you live in the 21st century and beyond. Lord, I thank you that every prayer is heard and answered. Again, I thank you for your grace and mercy and your unconditional love. In your most precious name, I pray.

Amen.

~Candace

Lord, please make me the head and not the tail. Let me be a strong woman of God for you. You are excellent and excellent is your name. Help me to be the virtuous woman you have called me to be. You are the lover of my soul.

~Anonymous

Lord keep us. Black women, look up and live. God is watching us. Always trust in Him. He will always be there with us and for us. Love everyone forever.

~Anonymous

Dear Lord,

Every day, I seek you more. No matter what happens, I still call on you. You are my strength today and forever.

Amen.

~Anonymous

Father God,

I just want to thank you for your grace and mercy and all that you brought me through. I thank you for the good days and I thank you for the bad days that I thought I could not make it. Only by your grace, I was able to make it with the faith that I had in you. As a black woman, I have had many ups and many downs. I've been looked over many times; doors closed in my face. But thanks be to God, His promise is true. He said he would never leave us, nor forsake us. He opened doors for me when they were closed in my face. Father, I pray that you bless everyone whatever the problem they're going through. I know you are able to bring them out. Father, help me to have a closer walk with you. Thank you for everything. In Jesus' name, Amen.

~Alice Heard

Dear Lord,

Our most gracious father, thank you for this day. Thank you for angels of mercy and grace. Lord, in this day and time as a black woman, I thank you. I honor you; I praise you for your guidance, for your protection, for the food, shelter, health, job, car, activity of my limbs, and full usage of my mind. Lord, thank you. You know what my purpose is. You know how my sisters are to come together to do *Your* work. Lord, help us to encourage, support, and help lift each other up. Help us to stand *strong on your word*. Be a light unto our path. Thank you Lord for being you. Amen.

~Anonymous

Father,

I pray that you give her wisdom and understanding of your will. Give her the courage and knowledge she needs to raise her children your way. Give her the ability to uplift and encourage the black man to simply be one. Stand with her and give her courage to expect excellence in herself as a black woman. In Jesus' name I pray.

Amen

~Anonymous

We as black women are strong in our beliefs. But God don't show no color. I thank God for him. Because he take us as we are. That's why I praise him through the good and the bad.

Thank you, Jesus.

~Anonymous

Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on the women of the world every day. We will not and shall not and cannot make it without you, for you are our balm in Gilead. God we need your presence in our lives to do your work, to maintain our family life and to make a difference in the society at large. God make women worthy, empowered, intelligent, and beautiful in your eyes. Help us to show others that we can praise you for all things and thank you for your love, grace, and mercy.

Amen.

~Rae

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for all that you are to me and who I am because of you. Father, thank you for watching my family and my friends. Lord, thank you for giving me the strength I have needed when I felt I was weak and couldn't go on. Lord, thank you for ordering my steps in the way that you would have me to go. Lord, use me for your service so that I may be what you would have me to be. Lord, continue to strengthen and keep me in all that I am and all that I hope to be. Lord, I am fearfully and wonderfully made and as I continue to grow in you, I will count it all joy for without you, I am nothing, but with you, I can do all things.

Amen

~ Stay Lanette

Lord, it is me, Pat. I know you know me, for you made me who I am. I am the young black girl who has attended the same church for over half of a century. I have grown up to be this Black woman who learned from other Black women how to Love and Praise God. My prayer is that younger black females will see my light and know it comes from you. My Heavenly Father, thank you for being so Gracious to me.

Amen, Amen, Amen.

~Pat

Dear Heavenly Father, I come to you today to ask for a special prayer on our Black women. Please keep us wrapped in your arms. Also, please keep us safe from all harm. I ask that you watch over our Black women. Keep us knowledgeable and wise in what we do. I know that you are a healer. Please Lord, heal anyone in need. Heal their bodies and bless their souls. I would like to thank you for what you are doing and what you are going to do. In these blessings, I ask in your name.

Amen.

~Jennifer Phillips

Dear God,

I thank you for everything in all of creation and thank you for making me - a Black woman. Lord, help me to always know my self-worth and have the ambition and confidence to conquer everything that I am set out to accomplish. Help me to lift up my fellow Black woman, to provide encouragement, love, and give her compliments to reassure her that God made beautiful beings when He made us. To help her when she's down and be there to talk to. Help us to not be jealous of one another, but elated in the accomplishments made by our powerful sisters, and the numerous gifts we have to share in order to build stronger generations of Black women. In all these things I ask in your name.

Amen.

~Anonymous

Oh Lord, Our Heavenly Father in Whom we put our trust, Our Maker, Our Deliverer, Our Way Maker. We as black women come before the throne of grace. You know our struggles, our journey, and also where we are now. Continue to be with us as we travel through.

Come Lord Jesus bind my mind with the mind of Christ that I will always remember that you are my help and that I do not have to react out of my human anxiety and vexation, but you will always be there. Thank you Lord. In the name of Jesus.

Amen.

~Anonymous

Dear God

We love you and honor you as our Father. Today, we come to you as Black Women. Lord, we give you all the praise. We thank you for being here for us. We know through all our trials and tribulations, we have been able to depend on you Lord.

Lord, help us to be good role models for our community. Help us to take care of the elderly.

Lord, just rock us in your arms this day. In Jesus Christ's name. The matchless son of God, we pray.

Amen! Amen! Amen!

~BJW

God, thank you. Thank you for making me! I am a black woman. Life is an everyday struggle, but you are still good. You don't make mistakes, so I know my situation is only temporary. I love you and the more I seek you, the more you show yourself to be mighty. You have done so much for me and I am grateful. I lost one child, thought I would never have anymore, but you blessed me with three. I am not married, yet you don't punish me for what I have done in sin. Yet you keep my family in your hands. We don't have a lack, but we live a life of abundance. I thank you for my village that helps me raise my children. I am grateful for you giving me a sound mind and a strong body so I can work to do your will. Use me as your vessel. I let people use me and there was no reward. Now I am on your team. Heaven is my goal. Anyway you bless me, I will be satisfied. My entire purpose is will. Everything else takes a back seat. I pray all women learn to lean on you as I have. Love you and bless you, in your precious name I pray. Lord, we ask that you will bless black women with hope and prosperity. We need your help in many ways. Many of us are single moms trying to raise our children with no male figure to help us. Please watch over us and help us raise them to be strong men and women who make positive contributions to society.

Amen.

~Davina Williams

Some of us are domestic abuse victims and we don't know how to get out of a relationship that is not working. Lord, please help them to find a way out of a bad situation. Other black women are suffering from various health issues (e.g. cancer, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and other conditions). Lord, we know that you have the power to heal any condition. Please heal them and take care of their every need. Some black women struggle to earn the money needed to provide for their families so that they can experience a good quality of life. Lord, make a way for them to provide for themselves and their families. We love you Lord and we know that no task is too difficult for you to solve. Bless us Lord and give us the strength to carry on. We love and adore you and praise your Holy name,
Amen.

~Patsy Bryant

Dear Lord,

First, I'd like to start by saying "Thank You Lord for all you've done thus far. If you don't do anything else for us, you've already done enough. Father, give us black women power, strength, encouragement, knowledge, wisdom, compassion, loving hearts, and understanding. God bless us so that we may be a blessing to others. Lord, give us a Christ-like mind. Lord, help us to grow strong in you- father. Help us to be the women you have called us to be. Help us to not sit down on our gifts. Lord, help us not to become victims of the opinions society forms of us, but let us know that we are children of a king. Father, bless us black women to be strong in our faith and our daily walk with you. Help us to not give up during trials and tribulations, but to look to the hills from which cometh our help Lord. Lord, help us to seek your face. Help us to seek an intimate relationship with you Lord. Bless us Lord so that we know you are all we need. Father, let black women know that we only need to lean and depend on you. Bless us to be great mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, grandmothers, wives, and sisters-in-Christ. We will be careful to give you all the praise! These and all other blessings, I ask in the precious name of Jesus.

Amen.

~Tenisha Folley

It's hard being a woman, wife, and mother- the work is never done and most of the time seems not appreciated. But just hold on, God knows how much we can bear. We need to know how to let things go and let God handle it. It doesn't make us any less if things don't seem to work out because it is not in our control. Sometimes, we try to be too much for too many people and it wears us out. We don't enjoy being ourselves because we are tired. Learn to relax, learn to let others make their own mistakes so they can learn and grow. The kids have to be able to manage after we leave this world so ease off, it'll be hard, but it'll be best for everyone. Give it to God.

~Beverly Sue Blackmon

Father God, I come before you, thanking you for your many blessings. Lord, I know that I am not always worthy, but you look beyond my faults and see my needs. I am honored to be in your presence and surrounded by your grace, mercy, and love. Lord, I thank you for this moment and being able to be in your presence, so I can just say thank you. Thank you for waking me up, thank you for being a provider, thank you for a roof over my head, thank you for forgiveness. Lord, I thank you for all these things and so many more and if I had 10,000 tongues to say thank you, it still wouldn't be enough. Thank you Lord. You are always there when I call and I just want to thank you. Thank you for making me a black woman! Thank you for my struggles and my blessings. Lord, when no one else is available, you always make a way. Thank you for making me a mother, sister, daughter, friend, comforter, nurturer and so many other things and for always allowing me to live up to these titles and many hats that I wear. Thank you for allowing me to praise you Lord. My blessings and struggles are reasons for me to praise you and I am humbled in your presence. Lord, I pray that black women learn to embrace each other and uplift one another in an effort to uplift your name. I pray for continuous blessings for all black women and for forgiveness when we do things that are not pleasing to you. Thank you Lord for allowing me to come to you. I pray this prayer in your son Jesus' name.

Amen.

~Blessed and Highly Favored

Dear Lord, Thank you for all that you do for us black women. Thank you for health and strength. Thank you for wisdom and knowledge. Thank you for forgiving us when we sin and fall short of your glory. Bless all women everywhere, especially Candace for her special gifts. I ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen, Amen, and Amen.

~Anonymous

From A Black Man:

Father God,

We pray a special prayer for the queens of the universe, the nation of black women, the mother of Your black children! Eternal Heavenly Father, We pray for your continuous strengthening power for our black women for they are the glue of the family unit and the balancer of men! In the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, We pray,

Amen.

~David K. Greer

Lord, Jesus I thank you for this opportunity for black women to minister to other black women. I thank you for the insight that you have given me to write this prayer book with the beautiful black women of Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. I pray that you will hear everyone of our prayers and that you will abundantly bless all of the women who wrote prayers for this prayer book and all of the women who read the prayers in this prayer book. In your most precious name I pray.

Your Humble Servant,

~Candace

APPENDIX M

SECONDARY RESEARCH PRE-TEST/POST-TEST

Have You Lost Your Passion For Jesus Sermon Pre-Test/Post-Test

By completing this survey, I give consent for the information included in this survey to be used by Dr. Candace Allen-Staten as part of her Doctor of Ministry project and dissertation and on any future publications.

A1

Demographics:

Gender: Female ____ Male ____ Age Range: 18-34 ____ 35-49 ____ 50-65 ____ 66-75 ____ 76+ ____

Post-Test Questions:

1. How passionate are you about Jesus?

Not At All Somewhat Passionate Moderately Passionate Passionate Very Passionate

2. How passionate are you about worship?

Not At All Somewhat Passionate Moderately Passionate Passionate Very Passionate

3. What is passionate worship?

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